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Fokke Gerritsen

Local Identities

LANDSCAPE AND COMMUNITY IN THE LATE PREHISTORIC MEUSE-DEMER-SCHELDT REGION

Amsterdam University Press

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Fokke Gerritsen

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This book is a slightly revised version of the doctoral dissertation I completed in June 2001 and defended at the Faculty of Arts of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in October 2001. Since then, salvage excavations have continued unabated and have already added new details to our knowledge of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age communities that are at the heart of this study. I have, however, resisted the temptation to postpone publication for yet another time-consuming phase of collecting and incorporating the new data and updating the tables and appendices. The main reason is that there are as yet no indications that the most recent discoveries require changes to the interpretations and models proposed here. The text has been altered in minor ways, some omissions have been rectified, and the bibliography has been updated.
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1 Introduction

1.1 GENERAL THEME AND AIMS OF RESEARCH

In this study I will draw on a range of archaeological materials to present a history of the communities inhabiting the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt (MDS) region between the beginning of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Roman period. The aim is to elucidate some of the major social and cultural transformations that occurred during that period, covering roughly the first millennium BC. While a number of different histories could be written about the region and period, this one takes the form that it does because of the central theme that lies at its core: the reciprocal and dynamic relationships between human groups and the landscape.

This is a broad and vague description for a research theme; one that without further elucidation can conjure up quite different things, from ecologically-determined 'people-land' relationships to conceptualised landscapes and mythical geographies. It clearly needs a more precise definition; for the time being, however, I will retain this broad description and gradually clarify it in the course of this introduction. Moreover, as will become clear, the inclusiveness suggested by the description is an essential feature of the perspective that I advocate.

As a first exposition of the theme that I refer to as 'reciprocal and dynamic relationships between human groups and the landscape', let me briefly present a historical situation which contains in condensed form many of the elements that lie at the core of the subject of this study. In his book *Bad land. An American romance* the travel writer and novelist Jonathan Raban describes the history of the homesteaders on the prairie of Montana in the United States.[1] Attracted by the prospect of a tract of free land, people from Europe and the American east coast settled down on the prairie in the early years of the twentieth century. They found themselves in a vast open space, totally devoid of geographical features that could orient them. There was nothing there with which they could in some way identify, nothing to remind them of their native villages and towns. It was a landscape without history, or more precisely, without a history that they knew how to read. Of the thousands of hopeful arrivees, only a handful managed to 'take root' in this unintelligible space. Most others felt utterly estranged and displaced – even after building a homestead and sowing the land. Within a decade most families had moved on towards the west coast. The ones that stayed behind slowly built up a bond with the land over the course of several generations. But, significantly, this remained a very individual sense of belonging, one that scarcely translated into a notion of collective identity. Raban relates one particularly striking example of the lack of a sense of history and identity. As recently as 1993 Ismay, a small town in eastern Montana, chose to rename itself Joe. For the inhabitants the whimsical idea that mail sent from the local post office would be stamped with the name of one of the great heroes of American football – Joe Montana – easily outweighed the loss of their original name.[2]

[1] Raban 1996.

[2] Raban 1996, 17, 98-99. The old name itself was a contraction of Isabel and May, daughters of the president of the railroad company that founded the town in the 1910s.

In its extremes of failure and displacement, the situation described by Raban brings out crucial elements in the reciprocal relationships between humans and the landscape, precisely because they are lacking in the Montana of the homesteaders. Absent is an intimate knowledge of the land, its resources and constraints, acquired through decades of working the land. It is therefore very much a history of poor adaptation to a fragile environment, leading to soil depletion in record time. But equally important is the absence of emotional bonds with the landscape in which one lives, of collective sentiments of belonging and identity, of being a group settled in the same place and sharing a history. Only in their absence do these phenomena become visible to us; and only the dramatic effects of their absence show how powerful they can be. In this book I intend to explore their significance among prehistoric communities, in particular with regard to the way in which relationships with the landscape are an element in the construction of social groups and identities, and the ways in which changes in these relationships contribute to social transformation.

1.2 CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF FIRST MILLENNIUM BC TEMPERATE EUROPE

In the regions north of the Alps, the first millennium BC is commonly seen as a crucial, formative period. Bronze Age communities transformed themselves into dynamic, hierarchical Hallstatt and La Tène societies that were competitive and warlike, industrious and skilled. Their elite groups were involved in the production and long-distance trade of high-prestige artefacts. *Fürstensitze* formed the political and cultural centre of competing territories. Changing fortunes in the control over trade routes in the course of the Iron Age, especially those going as far as the Mediterranean regions, led to periodic shifts in the centres of power. That is, highly simplified, an image that one finds in overviews on first millennium BC Europe.[3] More particularly, it is used to characterise the central regions of Europe (fig. 1.1): eastern France, southern Germany, Switzerland (the west Hallstatt regions and later the Marne-Moselle region) and to a lesser extent those of Austria, Bohemia and Moravia (the east Hallstatt regions).

In the same and similar publications, a contrast is often made between these western and Central European societies and those further to the north, in the Low Countries, northern Germany and Scandinavia. The latter are presented as much less dynamic; they are seen as egalitarian village communities with a subsistence farming economy, only peripherally involved in prestige goods exchange. After a phase of brilliance in the Bronze Age, the Iron Age is thought of as a period of withdrawal from the larger European trade networks, and a concentration on village economy and subsistence production.[4] Barry Cunliffe expresses this opinion in the following manner:

The village economy of the North European Plain presents the most stable social and economic system evident in the whole of Europe in the first millennium. Isolated from the disruptive effects of the developing consumer markets of the Mediterranean and constrained by the rigours of the landscape in which they worked, the peasant communities had little incentive to embrace innovation or to aspire to status through the manipulation of luxury goods until Roman trading networks of the first and second centuries began to introduce a destabilizing note.[5]

[3] Collis 1984; Wells 1984; Harding 1994; Cunliffe 1994. Another point of view, going back to Childe (1930), holds that the Bronze Age was the first period to see an emergence of a 'European' entrepreneurial spirit (e.g. Kristiansen 1994; idem 1998).

[4] E.g. Kristiansen 1994. Often this viewpoint remains more implicit, but follows from the lack of attention that is paid to the northwestern and northern regions of Europe in overviews on the European Iron Age (e.g. Collis 1984).

[5] Cunliffe 1994, 353-354.

Fig. 1.1 Northwestern Europe. The location of the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region in relation to the western Hallstatt (southern Germany, eastern France) and La Tène (Marne-Moselle) regions.

Here the impression is created of communities living under harsh environmental conditions; they are too busy carving out a living for themselves to notice the innovations and new power structures that are developing just beyond the horizon. It appears, thus, that the definition of Central European Hallstatt and La Tène cultures as *Hochkulturen* has also had an impact on the perception of the societies further to the north. This has only become stronger with the application of core/periphery and world-systems models since the 1980s. The designation of the west Hallstatt region, and later the Marne-Moselle region, as core areas (themselves peripheries in the Mediterranean world economy), automatically implied that the areas further to the north were more peripheral, and consequently less complex and dynamic.[6] Some of the

[6] Brun 1993; idem 1994; Cunliffe 1994; Kristiansen 1998; cf. Diepeveen-Jansen 2001, 2-8 for a similar observation on the archaeological literature.

'high culture' of the core area emanated towards the north in the form of rare prestige goods, but this took place on a restricted scale and reinforced rather than nullified the supposed passive position of the peripheral communities. Kristian Kristiansen speaks of structural divergences between northern Europe on the one hand and Central Europe and the Mediterranean on the other. While the latter evolved into complex societies in the first millennium BC, the northern ones resisted this and retained their 'egalitarian' traditions.[7]

A preoccupation with stability and continuity is found not only in works that look at pan-European developments and that are necessarily comparative and generalising, but also in site-based and regional studies on the first millennium BC in the Northwest European Plain itself. With exceptions, the Late Bronze Age and the pre-Roman Iron Age are presented as periods of limited social change. Even though changes in material culture, burial customs and settlement patterns are recognised, these are rarely interpreted in terms of structural social and cultural transformations.

Two aspects can be identified that partly explain this perspective. Firstly, the prehistoric archaeology of the Northwest European Plain has long been characterised by a research tradition that focused primarily on the environmental aspects of the relationships between human groups and the landscape, based on an empiricist perspective with an environmental-determinist slant.[8] Settlement structures and patterns are usually seen as governed largely by the agrarian subsistence economy and thus directly by factors of climate, soil, topography and demography. Equally, changes in settlement structure have been interpreted almost without exception as driven by changes in the agrarian economy, and more in terms of variations on a pattern of long-term structural stability and continuity than in terms of transformations with social and cultural dimensions.

Secondly, the relatively 'poor' material culture and the weak presence of elements that are associated with elites and power such as fortified places and rich metalwork can partly be held responsible for this view. For one thing, their absence has made it difficult to devise refined typo-chronological sequences that are necessary to observe changes in archaeological patterns within relatively short time frames. But perhaps more importantly, the poor material culture has been equated in the literature with relatively egalitarian societies that lacked the natural resources to gain dominant positions in trade networks and thus develop into hierarchically organised societies with central places, chiefly burials and rich metalwork depositions.[9]

Underlying both aspects appears to be a rather restricted notion of social and cultural change. It is viewed either in a traditional vein in terms of the formation or dissolution of ethnicity-based cultures, or in a neo-evolutionary or structural Marxist vein as increasing or decreasing social complexity and socio-political integration or disintegration. In both senses, the late prehistoric material culture assemblages of the Northwest European Plain do indeed appear representative of static and conservative societies, much in the way described by Cunliffe. Illustrative in this respect is also Lotte Hedeager's 1992 book on Iron Age societies in Denmark.[10] During the Danish earlier pre-Roman Iron Age (500-300 BC, roughly the Middle Iron Age in the Dutch terminology, see 1.5), several changes occur in the farmstead and settlement evidence which indicate the formation of village settlements and agricultural intensification.[11] This leads Hedeager to consider the capacity for social change in the earlier Iron Age, and she comes to the conclusion that even though the ingredients for change were present, there were structural constraints in

7 Kristiansen 1994, 14-15; idem 1998, 419.

8 E.g. Denmark: Rindel 1999; Cf. Fabech et al. 1999; Myhre 1999; Germany: Kossack/Behre/Schmid 1984; Netherlands: Waterbolk 1962; idem 1982 and 1995.

9 Cf. Hiddink 1999, esp. 42-82 and 229-238, for a critical evaluation of this common interpretation of the archaeological data of the Northwest European Plain.

10 Hedeager 1992.

11 Hedeager 1992, 180-223.

kinship and inheritance traditions that kept a check on real change.[12] It was not until some of the local chieftains managed to establish contacts with the Roman Empire and gain control of the trade in prestige goods that real changes in the social fabric could take place.[13] Her conclusions are in line with a more general tendency in Iron Age archaeology in northern Europe, which is to attribute social change to either earlier or later periods, to the Bronze Age and in particular to the Roman period.

It is not my intention in this study to make a case for viewing the first millennium BC societies of the Northwest European Plain as equally bustling, competitive and complex as those of Central Europe, but rather to argue that the ideas of stability and conservatism need to be questioned. In my opinion, and I hope to demonstrate this in this book, the period of the Late Bronze Age to the Early Roman period was a period in which several fundamental transformations took place in the MDS region. Even though many categories of material culture hint strongly at social and cultural continuity, there are also indications that suggest that the world in which local groups lived during the Late Bronze Age was fundamentally different from the one that a community in the Late Iron Age would have been familiar with. These are changes that cannot be understood in terms of an integration into larger socio-political entities or increasing social complexity. I will attempt to show that they have to be understood as transformations in the ways in which local groups constructed collective identities, and defined themselves as groups in relation to their members, to other groups and to the world around them. The fact that these transformations have not been sufficiently recognised to date is due - not to the absence of the right data sets - but to the dominant comparative and ecological perspectives and the restricted notion of what constitutes social change.

The key to tracing these rather subtle social dynamics over a thousand year period is a regional rather than a supra-regional scale of analysis, and a comprehensive perspective on the ways in which people lived and worked in the landscape.

1.3 RECENT TRENDS IN LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT ARCHAEOLOGY

Landscape archaeology has been one of the most vibrant fields of theoretical and empirical research of the last decade, and there has been a great proliferation of publications on the theme. There are considerable differences in the ideas about what landscape is, and what landscape archaeology can and should focus on,[14] but there are also some broad trends discernible in the recent approaches to the theme. I will very briefly present and discuss a few of these trends in this section, focusing particularly on those that are relevant to my own approach.

A theme of research in archaeology that has been of importance since the early years of the discipline and continues to be so concerns human relationships with the natural environment. One aspect that was studied almost to the exclusion of all others is human ecology, the ways in which the natural environment enabled and constricted people with respect to subsistence, economy and social interaction.[15] Archaeologists have looked mainly at the distribution of resources, their exploitation and the technology and risks involved in this, and have combined this with studies of demography and settlement systems.[16]

[12] Hedeager 1992, 240-242.

[13] Hedeager 1992, 242-246. Cf. Bazelmans 1996, 252-259.

[14] Studies that discuss the recent developments in landscape archaeology: Johnston 1998; Ashmore/Knapp 1999; Van Dommelen 1999.

[15] Butzer 1982 for this definition of human ecology.

[16] Butzer 1982; Ashmore/Knapp 1999, 7.

The environment is seen in this perspective as real and objectifiable, existing independent of human perception of it; it forms the stage on which human history unfolds. While this theme is not by definition restricted to a particular school of archaeology, since the 1960s it has become closely associated with processual approaches.

From the 1970s onwards, archaeologists have also begun to consider the landscape's social dimensions. Notions of a territorially divided landscape were introduced by scholars such as Renfrew for Great Britain and the Aegean and Waterbolk for the Netherlands.[17] Influences from social geography and economics can further be detected in the application of such models as central-place theory and site-catchment analysis.[18] In conjunction with this there has been a gradual and on-going shift from a site-based perspective to a landscape perspective in which - theoretically - all archaeological and topographic features could be integrated in comprehensive research strategies. In many parts of Europe this has led to a much greater use of survey techniques which document not only settlements, cemeteries and above-ground monuments, but also field systems, isolated farmsteads, mining operations and other elements of the fossil landscape. A somewhat more recent but related development in excavation methodology, at least in the Netherlands, has been a drastic increase in the scale of the excavated areas. Several long-term regional projects have abandoned to some extent their focus on nucleated settlements, collective cemeteries and special purpose sites and specifically aim at exposing significant segments of the ancient landscape.[19]

In line with wider trends in archaeology, landscape studies in the past decade have turned away from human ecology approaches. Several fields of research that have been explored more recently arise primarily from an interest in social meaning and cultural values.[20] As part of a greater emphasis on the ideological dimensions of the landscape, much attention has been paid to studying the representation of cosmological orders. Starting from ethnographic observations which indicate that the landscape in pre-modern societies usually amounted to more than physical features and the living creatures inhabiting it (there were also ancestors, deities, spirits and the like),[21] prehistoric cosmologies have been studied from the spatial dimensions of rituals performed in the landscape. Readily identifiable 'nodes' in ancient mythical geographies, including burial monuments, henges, sanctuaries and rock art sites have received most attention,[22] while more recently unaltered 'natural' places have alsobeen singled out as significant features.[23] The 'sacred' landscape has thus become a prominent theme of research.[24]

Important insights for the study of the ideational aspects of the landscape have also come from the conceptualisation of landscape as a materialisation of memory and history.[25] Myths, ancestral histories and biographies are represented in spatial form by the landscape, and can be recreated through specific movements and actions in that landscape. Places that have a special significance in a cosmological sense are always places of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) as well, foci of narratives that keep alive (mythical) occur-

17 Renfrew 1973; Waterbolk 1973; idem 1979. See the introduction to chapter 4 for a more extensive discussion.

18 Vita-Finzi/Higgs 1970; Hodder and Orton 1976; Clarke 1978; Butzer 1982, 211-229; cf. Fabech et al. 1999, 17 for developments in Scandinavia.

19 E.g. Fokkens 1996, 203-205; Roymans 1996a, 236-240.

20 Similar developments have taken place in geography, anthropology and history: e.g., Cosgrove 1993; Hirsch/O'Hanlon 1995; Schama 1996.

21 Cf. contributions in Hirsch/O'Hanlon 1995; De Coppet/Iteanu 1995.

22 E.g., Bender 1993b; Bradley 1993; Tilley 1994; Barrett 1994.

23 Tilley 1996; Derks 1998, section 4.1; Bradley 2000; Fontijn 2002b.

24 Bradley 1993; idem 1998; Barrett 1994; Roymans 1995a; Derks 1998, section 4.7.

25 Inglis writes: 'A landscape is the most solid appearance in which history can declare itself ' (1977, 489). Also Küchler 1993; Ingold 1993.

rences and actions in the past. This historical dimension forms an essential element of a place and the rituals and ceremonies in which that place figures. In line with these notions, the histories or biographies of monuments, not only at their time of construction or use, but also in later periods, have been investigated. Much evidence has been brought forward that indicates that barrows, for example, continued to be valued, either positively or negatively, in later times; they continued to play a role in the mythical geography of a social group.[26] Constructing a new monument next to, around, over, or in some opposition to older ones has to be understood, therefore, as a conscious and culturally meaningful act, an act meant to create a link to, or to create (or eradicate) the past. Such links may serve for instance to reproduce and legitimate structures of social inequality.

The acknowledgement of a (mythical) past also forms an important underlying principle of a form of landscape archaeology that is currently popular in Dutch archaeology and that can be described as the study of the 'cultural biography' of the landscape.[27] This concept enables the researcher to consider the multiple, historical dimensions of the landscape from antiquity up to the present, and to incorporate not only accounts of the economic uses of the landscape but also of the social, ideological and political dimensions.

Although interest in the social and symbolic dimensions of the landscape has become widespread, conceptions of what landscape is and how it relates to the culturally specific understanding of it by people in the past vary considerably. At one end of the scale, the ideational dimension of the landscape is viewed as something based on but distinct from physical reality. Robert Johnston has recently grouped approaches that proceed from this tenet under the term 'explicit' approaches.[28] Others have referred to the landscape as a stage or the backdrop to human action.

The perception of the landscape, in an 'explicit' view, can be visualised as a layer of meaning which people project onto a real, physical environment. To a certain degree this layer can be incorporated or ignored, depending on the biological, economic or cultural interests of the researcher. This is because an underlying assumption is that people's behaviour is only partly governed by their perception of the world around them. Ancient people's culturally-specific understandings of their landscape constitute a factor that the archaeologist may consider either distorting or interesting. But in the final instance – for adherents of an 'explicit' perspective, that is – other people's behaviour can be related to and understood as strategies (based on common-sense, rationality, economic or maximising considerations) that make sense to modern westerners.

At the other end of the spectrum lie Johnston's 'inherent' approaches.[29] Here the distinction between the physical reality of the world and human perception of it is blurred; the landscape itself is a cultural construct. Even though it is recognised that a real world independent of human perception and enculturation exists, such a world remains completely outside human awareness. The landscape, in this view, is not a given, but is created through the perceptions of the people living in it. In the present age we may perceive a distinction between a real, objectifiable landscape and a landscape of beliefs and values. The assumption underlying inherent approaches, on the other hand, is that in pre-modern societies such a distinction was not made or not in the same way.

Accepting this assumption has a very significant consequence for archaeology. It follows that people's actions were based on *their* understanding of the world around them, and that those actions (and the

[26] Roymans 1995a; Hingley 1996; Bradley/Williams 1998; Holtorf 1998; Sopp 1999. For examples from the MDS region, see section 4.2.4.

[27] Kolen 1995; Roymans 1995a; idem 1995b; Fontijn 1996. For the notion of a cultural biography, Kopytoff 1986; cf. chapter 3.1.5.

[28] Johnston 1998, 57-60.

[29] Johnston 1998, 61-63.

remains that archaeologists find) cannot be understood in the terms of our contemporary view of the world. John Barrett has described this position succinctly as '*human responses to given material conditions must…be regarded as culturally mediated*'.[30]

It may be useful at this point to pay another quick visit to Montana and its homesteaders to illustrate the difference between these two conceptualisations of landscape. The history of the homesteaders can be understood as an example of how a specific world view and the actions based on that view were ill-suited to the particular physical environment. This world view can be characterised as an early 20th century, fundamentally European view. The land was approached with a great optimism derived from science; each homesteader owned a copy of an agricultural manual in which a certain Mr. Hardy W. Campbell unfolded his theories on 'scientific farming for semi-arid lands'.[31] They were theories that soon proved to have disastrous effects. Strikingly different from this 'scientific' world view is the way in which previous inhabitants of the Montana prairie saw the world around them. For centuries, the landscape had been the place which Plains Indians saw as their home and where they hunted antelope and buffalo.

For someone advocating an 'explicit' perspective the fact that the landscape had a completely different cultural meaning for the two social groups does not preclude the possibility of studying them both with the same analytical concepts. If one looks beyond the culturally-specific perception of the landscape, their patterns of behaviour represent two different adaptations to the same physical conditions, one successful, the other not. From an 'inherent' perspective, this is highly problematic. It may be possible to understand the homesteaders' actions in modern, western terms. But the actions of the Plains Indians in relation to the physical environment can only be understood by reference to the ways in which they culturally created a landscape out of that environment. It is highly unlikely (although not impossible) that the Plains Indians saw their buffalo hunting in terms of an effective and sustainable way of coping with a fragile environment; the relationships between humans and animals often have cosmological connotations in non-western societies. In order to understand anything of the social life and culture of Plains Indians, according to an 'inherent' viewpoint, it is necessary to study the way in which *they* made sense of the world.

The question then becomes whether and how it is possible to know anything of another culture's understanding of the world. One avenue that has been explored to this end is the phenomenology of landscape.[32] Phenomenologically-inspired archaeology tries to recover the manners in which people in antiquity experienced and understood the world. The underlying supposition is that this understanding allowed people to function in the world in a socially meaningful, knowledgeable way. Despite professing the importance of incorporating all aspects of social life, many studies have singled out monuments that are still visible above ground for special attention.[33] Monuments not only emphasise the historical and cosmological significance of particular places but, as has been pointed out by phenomenologists, they also structure and constrain the experiences and narratives embedded in the landscape. They help control the individual's abilities to construct different understandings of the world, and as mnemonic markers give control of knowledge of an ancestral past.

Several of the studies that most explicitly propagate a phenomenological approach have stayed close to the philosophical foundations, taking their cues directly from thinkers such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.[34] As a result, debate about phenomenological archaeology has often been about the correctness or depth of the interpretation of the sources of inspiration, detracting somewhat from the discussion of the archaeological insights presented by the studies of Julian Thomas and others.[35] Moreover, landscape

30 Barrett 1994, 164.

31 Raban 1996, 28-29.

32 Tilley 1994; Thomas 1996.

33 Cf. Gosden 1996, 25; Brück/Goodman 1999a, 10

34 Gosden 1994; Tilley 1994; J. Thomas 1996. Tuan 1977 is often cited as a geographical 'translation' of phenomenological philosophy.

phenomenology has become closely associated with the specific approach advocated by Christopher Tilley.[36] While recognising the great difficulties involved, Tilley explores the ways in which ancient people's understandings of the world can be regained by moving around in a contemporary landscape containing ancient monuments. In landscapes where the relief of the landscape has not greatly altered since antiquity, some of the visual experiences offered by this relief and the monuments associated with it may be reminiscent of what people experienced in prehistory.[37] There is, understandably, disagreement about the potential of this specific method to come to sustainable arguments about the past.[38] Moreover, its heavy dependence on visual experiences, even if one assumes that those would have triggered the same responses now as in the past, raises questions about the scope of the method for making statements about many aspects of social life.

Many recent landscape studies incorporate elements of phenomenological approaches, although they generally steer clear of the cliffs of philosophical debate and rely on some form of contextual analysis rather than a 're-experiencing' method. Characteristic common features – although there is certainly no unified theoretical programme underlying these studies – are a concern for people's own (embodied, experienced) conception of the landscape, and a notion that this cognition includes both discursive elements brought to the fore in the performance of ceremonies and rituals, and non-discursive elements that are part of and constructed through all social practices. That is to say, the social practices of everyday life are equally important in the construction of cosmological orders as monuments and sacred places. The analytical separation between the sacred landscape of beliefs and cosmology and the functional landscape of subsistence practices, practical attitudes and exploitation has thus become obsolete. Moreover, as Derks has argued:

...our reconstructions of a living in the past seem to have the best chance to correspond with the conceptions the people concerned had of it themselves, if we include in the investigations an analysis of the routine every-day experiences, of the daily practical choices and hasty rituals, in short, of all those things which "go without saying".[39]

Furthermore, the landscape is no longer viewed as something fundamentally different from material culture.[40] The relationship between material culture and the construction and transformation of social identities has been recognised for some time, but a conception of the landscape as something extraneous to humans has prevented serious consideration of the relationship between landscape and social identity. With an understanding of landscape as a form of material culture it is possible to consider how an aspect of identity construction was present in people's full range of interactions with the landscape.

During the 1990s and to some extent to the present day, landscape studies have been dominated by a focus on monuments and ritual sites. More recently the realisation that the ideational dimensions of the landscape are also to be found in the remains of everyday life, in the settlements, field systems or

35 See for example the discussion following a précis of J. Thomas 1996 in *Archaeological dialogues* 3/1 (1996).

36 Tilley 1994, 73-75.

37 Tilley writes (1994, 74):'This perpetually shifting human visual experience of place and landscape encountered in the walk has not altered since the Mesolithic. Things in front of or behind you, within reach or without, things to the left and right of your body, above and below, these most basic of personal spatial experiences, *are shared with prehistoric populations in our common biological humanity*' (emphasis mine).

38 E.g., Derks 1997, 129-130; Johnston 1998, 62-63; Fleming 1999; Chapman/Geary 2000 represent some of the favourable and critical comments on Tilley's approach.

39 Derks 1997, 127.

40 Van Dommelen 1999, 284.

watering places, has led to a renewed theoretical focus on those elements.[41] Residential practice forms a major part of the larger whole of dwelling practices, in particular in sedentary societies.[42] The traditionally strong functionalist framework for the interpretation of settlement data is being replaced by a greater interest in the settlement (and its constituent elements) as a culturally constructed, socially meaningful place in the landscape. As such, settlements present key information for studying how relations between people and between people and the socio-cosmological order were constructed and transformed. With this renewed interest in settlement studies, the theoretical debate of the 1990s on landscape archaeology, conducted primarily in Great Britain, has begun to converge with developments taking place simultaneously in parts of the European continent. There, a long tradition of large-scale research on rural settlements is combined with an emerging interest in the cultural dimensions of practices of daily life.

The anthropologist Tim Ingold acquainted archaeologists with the term 'dwelling perspective' in a well-known article published in 1993.[43] In Ingold's definition, dwelling is constituted by '*any practical operation carried out by a skilled agent in an environment, as part of his or her normal business of life*.'[44] As I have described above, archaeologists are beginning to take up this point, by paying explicit attention to the social practices of everyday life. Taking on a dwelling perspective as an anthropologist or archaeologist involves *'privileging the understandings that people derive from their lived, everyday involvement in the world*.[45] Here we recognise the key tenet of an 'inherent' perspective: dwelling involves a culturally specific way of understanding the world. Human actions are based on that understanding and at the same time they are the constituent elements of that understanding because there is no separation between dwelling in the landscape and creating the landscape.

The term 'dwelling perspective' is a highly evocative term and a powerful concept for looking at the dynamic and reciprocal relationships between humans and landscapes in the past. But on two points my definition of a dwelling perspective differs from the one presented by Ingold. Firstly, Ingold is concerned with understandings of the world that are produced by individual persons.[46] Perception is a psychological process that takes place in embodied minds; human agents perceive and act upon the landscape. As Ingold consistently points out, there is no such thing as self-contained individuals separate from their environment, but rather 'animals-in-the-environment'.[47] To me, however, an archaeological variant of a dwelling perspective must pay explicit attention to a collective component, focusing on the way in which dwelling takes place through social interaction. Dwelling, ways of seeing the world and constructing landscapes are collectively shared practices, ideas and values. Secondly, I feel that in Ingold's dwelling perspective there is little room for the physical environment. While people continuously create the landscape through their dwelling, the material that they have at their disposal for this – alongside their embodied mind – consists of very real matter. By stressing the constructed nature of the landscape, Ingold runs the risk of overlooking the fact that there is also a 'material' dimension with resources that are by nature unpredictable, with territorial and tenurial practices, and perhaps socio-political institutions that are imposed from the outside.[48] In the diachronic field of archaeology, there is not only temporalised landscape and a-temporalised nature,[49] but also a physical environment with a dynamic of its own. A dwelling

41 Hill 1995; Parker Pearson 1996; idem 1999a; Brück/Goodman 1999b; Brück 1999a; idem 1999c; idem 2000; Gerritsen 1999a; idem 1999b; Pollard 1999.

42 Brück/Goodman 1999b.

43 Ingold 1993. The concept comes from phenomenological philosophy and has also been used by geographers (Tuan 1977). Ingold has developed his notion of a dwelling perspective in a number of articles written during the 1990s, conveniently brought together in Ingold 2000.

44 Ingold 1993, 158.

45 Ingold 1993, 152.

46 Cf., in addition to Ingold 1993, also articles by the same author collected in Ingold 2000, esp. 1-7, 40-60, 157-171.

47 E.g., Ingold 2000, 171 [1996], 186 [1995].

perspective therefore needs to keep an eye out for the ecological components that may not be present within people's perceived landscape but that do set the parameters for their dwelling practices.[50] I will return to this topic in the following section.

This archaeologically-attuned definition of a dwelling perspective underlies the approach that I explore in chapters 3 and 4. There I consider the ways in which households and local communities created socially and culturally meaningful places for themselves, through the construction and use of dwellings, fields complexes, monumental cemeteries and cult places.

Many will accept that a dwelling perspective – in Ingold's definition, mine or another's – presents a more sophisticated theoretical framework for studying archaeological landscapes than an 'explicit' one. However, I believe that this viewpoint needs qualification. It appears to me that a dwelling perspective has great potential, but also significant shortcomings. I feel that a dwelling perspective's main potential lies in giving an account of synchronic states and variations; it is less powerful as a means of analysing diachronic patterns and social transformations. This will be discussed further in the following section.

1.4 A LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Parallel to the recent interest in the landscape, a growing concern for small-scale social formations and matters of daily, domestic life can be observed. Archaeologies of the body, gender and households, as well as the renewed interest in settlement studies are perhaps the clearest examples of this trend. There are several aspects that go some way to explain its popularity. In the first place there is the realisation that no matter how impressive the tumuli and how ingenious the feats of monument builders appear to us, most people in prehistory were involved for much of their lives in the routines of mundane tasks, with life in and around the settlement and fields.[51] These 'normal' contexts, therefore, should yield archaeological information that can tell us about essential characteristics of life in the past, in a much more direct way than primarily political or ritual contexts can. Furthermore, in the literature on the archaeology of everyday life a dissatisfaction is often expressed with archaeologies that focus on larger social entities and on long-term processes, because they are felt to present a reconstruction of the past that is devoid of people. Or, when people are present, they are represented as passive and mindless, and one of the central goals of post-processual programmes has been to change this view.[52]

At a more abstract level, the attention to the small-scale and the personal can also be attributed to the recent popularity of social theory in archaeology, in particular Bourdieu's theory of practice and Giddens' structuration theory.[53] Individuals are seen as knowledgeable beings, prone to act according to more widely-held dispositions, but capable of conscious actions based on individual readings of the material conditions. The term used to denote this capability is agency. Although Giddens explores the relation-

[48] Of these elements, the socio-political dimension will figure only marginally in this study. For a very simple and crude illustration of the significance of this dimension I can refer to Jonathan Raban's Montana once more. For the Plains Indians, the dwelling potential that the environment offered was altered drastically when they were driven off by cattle rangers in the late 19th century.

[49] Ingold 1993, 172.

[50] An earlier article by Ingold (1986, 130-164) offers more leads in this respect than his later work inspired by ecological psychology. Cf. the introduction to chapter 4 of this study.

[51] E.g., Conkey/Gero 1991.

[52] Hodder 1986, 25-26; idem 1992, 98-99 [1982]; Cf. Johnson 1999, 104-105.

[53] Bourdieu 1977; idem 1990; Giddens 1979; idem 1984.

ships between structure and agency in the generation of social practices, it is agency that has become a key notion nowadays in much archaeological interpretation.[54] Set against the alleged passive role of humans in other archaeologies is the active individual in possession of agency. Structure exists, is reproduced and transformed in the actions of individual agents.

An example of a study which takes agency as the main source of social transformation is John Barrett's influential book *Fragments from Antiquity*.[55] Even though not unique of its kind, it is one of the few book-length, theoretically informed case studies with a landscape focus and a broad chronological framework (the British Neolithic and Bronze Age). Inspired by Giddens, Barrett asks in which ways it was possible in different phases of this long period to live as a socialised, knowledgeable and motivated human being.[56] To answer this question it is necessary, according to the author, to have '*…an understanding of how, in any particular period, the lives of people were created by their engagement upon those material conditions which the archaeologist is also able to investigate*'.[57] Barrett is primarily interested in how knowledgeable individuals are constructed through their interaction with material culture and landscape, but his statement can also be taken to describe the creation of social collectives and collective identities.

The trends towards a search for a 'peopled' past and an emphasis on agency have led to the development of exciting fields of research. Several fruitful new ways of looking at material culture and its contexts have come to the fore. As a result, archaeological practice has become more diverse and better equipped to deal with a multi-stranded and multi-vocal conception of the past. Surprisingly, however, close to two decades after Hodder's call to bring the active individual into archaeological enquiry,[58] an implicit or explicit desire to set archaeology free from preoccupations with structure and process is still frequently expressed. While this apparent need raises a few questions about the maturity of the field, it does explain the continuing resistance to anything that could be associated with ecological or processual archaeology, be it economic conjunctures, demographic trends or environmental change.[59] I feel that contemporary theoretical thinking will prove to be too one-sided in this respect, by excluding matters related to ecology and historical processes. Nevertheless, this imbalance does not in any way invalidate the potential and importance of these small-scale, local or agency-oriented approaches. In this study I myself will explore the social and symbolic constitution of households and local communities in the first millennium BC. Although not explicitly concerned with agency, my main interests are with social practices associated with contexts of small groups of people, interacting with each other through face-to-face encounters, within restricted sections of the landscape.

The present study differs from most of the literature on these topics, however, in combining an emphasis on small-scale social formations with a long-term perspective. By the latter term I do not mean so much a principal focus on the *longue durée* as defined by Braudel in terms of almost immobile geo-history.[60] It is simply a perspective that incorporates enough chronological depth to warrant an explicitly diachronic view, focusing on structural social and cultural transformations. Arguably, while the development of an archaeology of experienced everyday-life has led to a greater awareness of and sensitivity towards synchronic variation, this has taken place at the expense of an interest in diachronic developments. The passage of time in the literature on the archaeology of local communities and everyday life

54 Following Giddens, John Barrett defines agency as *the means of knowledgeable action* (1994, 5).

55 Barrett 1994.

56 Barrett 1994, 3-6, 155.

57 Barrett 1994, 4.

58 Hodder 1992, 98-99 [1982].

59 But see Barrett 1999 for a thoughtful and balanced argument for an integration of environmental and social perspectives.

60 Braudel 1972, 20; Bintliff 1991; Smith 1992; Fletcher 1992.

has come to be understood more in terms of experienced time, of rhythms and periodically recurring practices that structure days, seasons and life-times,[61] than in terms of historical time during which structural transformations take place.[62] This has led to something of a separation between, on the one hand, synchronic or micro-historical studies focusing on local matters, everyday-life and the role of agency, and diachronic studies, on the other hand, that investigate larger social entities, structures and processes. Perhaps this is understandable; the effects of individual agency may be relatively easily accessible to archaeology in cases with a restricted social scope and chronological depth, whereas in broader contexts those effects tend to become submerged under structure and process. But there is no inherent reason why a local perspective has to be combined with a synchronic approach. In fact, as I have argued in section 1.2, a combination of a diachronic approach and a focus on local and micro-regional contexts holds most promise for understanding socially fundamental but archaeologically subtle transformations.

Given a long-term framework it is necessary to consider whether a dwelling perspective – of the type defined above – is sufficiently capable of modelling diachronic change. A long-term perspective has in my opinion two main implications. Firstly, it implies a view of the past in which relatively more emphasis is placed on collective ideas, values and dispositions than on experience and individual understandings of the world. It should be emphasised, however, that this does not presuppose that material conditions of life have primacy over cognitive structures. World views, *mentalités* or collective and relatively durable value-systems are autonomous and even though related to material conditions, they are not determined by those conditions.[63] Secondly, a complex framework is needed for interpreting social and cultural change. This framework should make it possible to look at change both as a transformation brought about by the intended and unintended outcomes of the actions of human agents (acting from their understanding of the world), and as something that may or may not have been instigated by external stimuli.

The problem with the dwelling perspective is not that it offers no explanatory framework for social change. In fact, one of the essential tenets of the structuration theory underlying many dwelling approaches holds that people effect change through agency. Knowledgeable agents are capable of interpreting, manipulating, and contesting social structures, thereby establishing social transformations.[64] But, as I have argued above, a weakness of the dwelling perspective is that it tends to ignore the fact that these processes occur within a context of culturally mediated but at the same time also very real and not necessarily stable material conditions. To a degree, leaving the unstable nature of material conditions out of the picture is possible within a synchronic framework, but this becomes problematic in a long-term perspective.

Barrett's publication mentioned above can serve to elaborate this point, as it is one of the few studies that combines a dwelling perspective with an explicitly diachronic framework. One of the major changes that Barrett discusses concerns a shift from long-fallow to short-fallow agricultural systems in the course of the second millennium BC.[65] This represented a major social transformation, and changed the way in which knowledgeable agents made sense of the world. Whereas before the mode of engagement with the landscape was based on movement along paths and between places, Barrett holds that this changed to an engagement based on place-bound practices and the development of tenure concerned with the control over bounded areas of land.[66] As indications for this transformation of agricultural practices,

61 The term often used for this is temporality, which constitutes an important concept in dwelling perspectives: Bailey 1990; Ingold 1993; J. Thomas 1996; cf. chapter 3 of this study.

62 Some examples of studies that do look explicitly at social change are Hodder 1990; R. Thomas 1997; Brück 2000.

63 *Mentalité* has been one of the core concepts for a generation of *Annales* historians succeeding Braudel, including Le Roy Ladurie (1975). Cf. Last 1995, 143.

64 Giddens 1984; Last 1995, 148-153.

65 Barrett 1994, chapter 6.

66 Barrett 1994, 146-147.

Barrett mentions technological change, agricultural intensification, an increase in the demarcation of land boundaries and a different definition of settlement locations.[67]

While I find the general purport of Barrett's argument convincing, it sheds light on only one dimension of a complex of related transformations. To me it appears that the limitations of a dwelling perspective are reached at this point. What is missing is a consideration of the background and possible underlying incentives of the changes that Barrett describes. What are the interrelations between the observed social transformation and its indications? Can we learn something from the chronological order in which these technological, agricultural and domestic changes occurred? Are there external factors that possibly prompted their appearance, changes in the material conditions that affected the way in which humans understood their world? In my view, those are highly relevant questions in the context of a long-term study. I fully agree with Barrett that we need to consider how human responses to changing material conditions were grounded in the specific understanding that those people had of those conditions.[68] But I do not think that such an enquiry disqualifies the search for possible underlying incentives of change.

By accepting the notion that many human responses are historically and culturally specific, and thus not determined *directly* by the material conditions, it does not follow that we can ignore the fact that the material conditions themselves are unstable. They may change both within or outside the range of human awareness. In the terms of Johnston discussed above, it appears therefore that we need to develop approaches to the material that combine 'inherent' and 'explicit' perspectives. In that way, it may be possible to take the human agent and the cultural mediation of material conditions seriously, and profit at the same time from the advantages of our distanced point of view. The latter enables us to identify long-term trends and developments that occurred outside the powers of observation of prehistoric humanity.

The key is, however, not to confuse an *identification* of external stimuli with an *explanation* for the particular form or path that a social transformation took. This appears, in fact, close to a more recent statement by Barrett, in which he says:

Thus, although it remains possible to describe the physical conditions which human populations have occupied in traditional and fairly objective terms, those same conditions only become historical forces by gaining cultural and political values. The possibilities of value are therefore determined by more than the availability of a material resource, they depend on the ways it was understood, exploited and exchanged by humans.[69]

In other words, both a view from the inside – a dwelling perspective focusing on the cultural valuation of material conditions by the groups under study – and a view from the outside – the changing 'availabilities' of material conditions – are necessary to build a complementary and diachronic understanding of people's dynamic and reciprocal relationships with the landscape.

To return to the theme of this study as described in the first section, let me formulate two sets of questions whose consideration will form a thread running through this study. They present, in my opinion, a promising avenue for studying social and cultural transformations in a prehistoric context. Firstly, how did households and local communities constitute and represent themselves as social groups through their interaction with the landscape, and how and why did this change over time? Secondly, how were these constructions of identity related to patterns of the appropriation of land, and how and why did this change over time? Clearly, these are two very closely related problems.

[67] Barrett 1994, 148-151.

[68] Barrett 1994, 164. In this sense, Barrett fits within the inherent approach described in the previous section.

[69] Barrett 1999, 495.

As the title of this study suggests, I am interested in local identities: the self-representations of people and residential groups in small-scale, local social contexts. This automatically means that a certain bias is introduced in the resulting pictures of prehistoric social life. This is a bias towards an idealised, harmonious view. Some aspects are left out of the picture; issues such as power, conflict, exclusion and boundaries will figure only marginally in the pages of this study. This is not the result of a naively idealistic idea of life in the past on my part. Rather, it is the result of limitations that I have set myself in subject matter and data sets. For a more comprehensive understanding of social life in the past, the theoretical perspective that I have expounded above will need to be expanded. An important complementary data set – metal artefacts (especially weapons and axes), mostly deposited in rivers, streams and marshes – stands at the heart of David Fontijn's work.[70] This data set can tell us about dimensions of martiality and power in the construction of identities. Moreover, by its location in the landscape it can shed light on the boundary zones between the territories of the local communities with which I will concern myself.

1.5 GEOGRAPHICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

For a number of reasons, the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region is particularly suited for a study of the questions raised above. In geographical terms it forms a unit that clearly differs from the landscapes around it (see chapter 2). More important is the long and extensive history of research in the area. There have been a number of large-scale excavation projects, particularly in the last twenty years. These represent long-term research efforts in several micro-regions. In addition, smaller excavations, find reports and observations provide data on local as well as regional patterns. Although there are differences in the amount and quality of the data that is available for the different chronological periods during the first millennium BC, on the whole the data are spread over the period. This means that it is possible, more so than in most other regions in Northwestern Europe, to distinguish between variation that is the result of chronological developments that occur across the region, and variation that is the result of locally differentiated practices and specific historical developments.

The designation of the period of study as the first millennium BC is convenient but not very precise. The beginning of the Urnfield period, concurrent with the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, is a more appropriate starting point as it represents a culturally significant and archaeologically recognisable transition. It is dated in the MDS region in the course of the 11th century BC.[71] But even that will not be taken as a strict starting point; developments that took place in the Middle Bronze Age will be incorporated where relevant. The same can be said for the end of the period. Although a case could be made for taking the beginning of the Roman era as the cut-off point for this study, I will venture into the first century AD when that leads to a better understanding of the patterns and processes of the Iron Age.

The Dutch chronological periodisation of Middle and Late Bronze Age and Early, Middle and Late Iron Age will be used in this study. This differs from the terminology used in neighbouring countries, where Hallstatt and La Tène periodisations are more familiar. Categories of material culture such as metalwork that would make it possible to date archaeological assemblages to a sub-phase of the German or French chronology are too rare in MDS contexts to make that periodisation generally applicable. Figure 1.2 shows the Dutch periodisation and its correspondence to other chronologies, as well as absolute dates. Also included is the periodisation that is used for the important micro-region of Oss, which runs from the end of the Late Bronze Age to the beginning of the Roman period, and to which reference will be

[70] Fontijn in 2002b.

[71] Verwers 1969; Van den Broeke 1991.

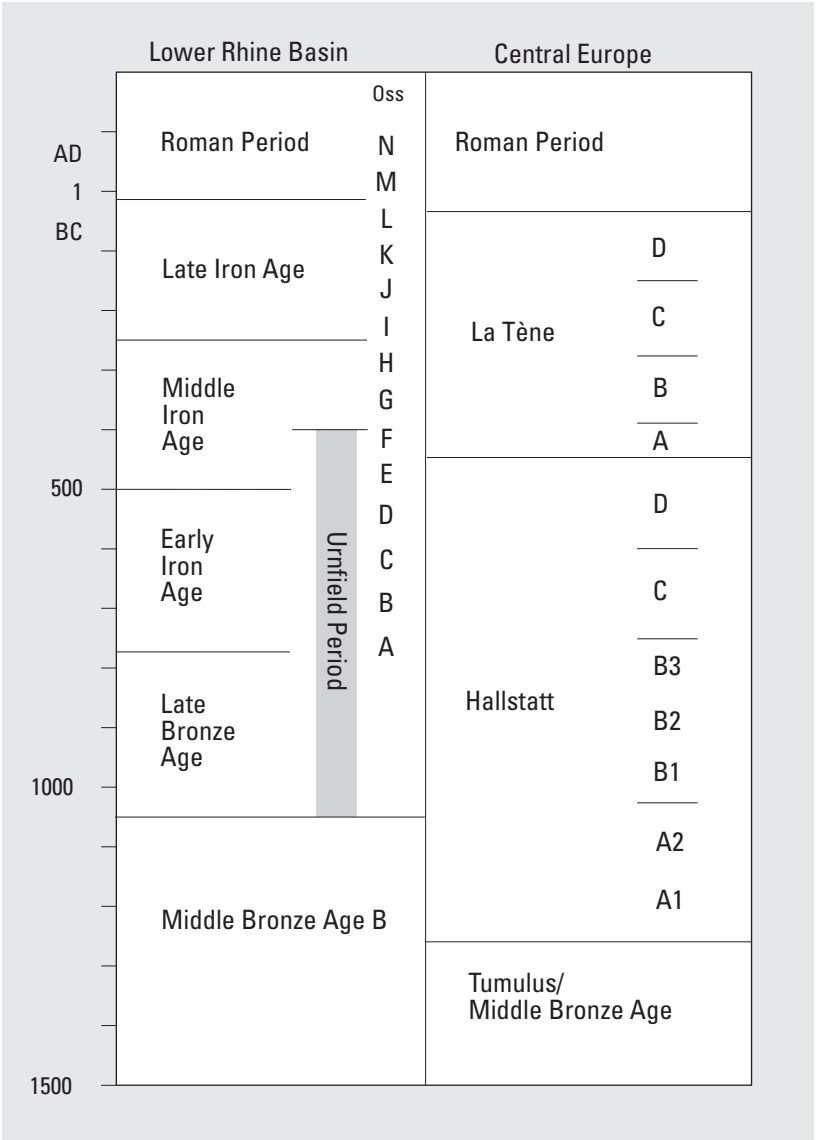

Fig. 1.2 Chronological periodisation used in the Lower Rhine Basin, and its relationships to the Central European chronology. Also indicated is the pottery-based chronology developed on the basis of the excavations at Oss (Van den Broeke 1987a).

made in the text. It is based on ceramic assemblages from settlement contexts, taking the relative occurrences of a number of elements of form, paste and decoration into account.[72] The Oss chronology divides the Early, Middle and Late Iron Age into four sub-phases each (a sub-phase represents a period of about 50 to 75 years). While this forms a significant refinement, it is only rarely possible to date assemblages outside Oss to one single or to a cluster of Oss phases. This is the result not only of sub-regional ceramic variations, but also of the fact that a sizeable number of potsherds are needed for a reliable dating.

A word should also be said here about the use of the term Urnfield period. While in western and Central Europe this is often taken as approximately the period of the Late Bronze Age, in the Lower Rhine Basin of which the MDS region forms a part, urnfield traditions continue until the early stages of the Middle Iron Age (ca. 400 BC). The term Urnfield period is used accordingly, and includes the Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and beginning of the Middle Iron Age.

[72] Van den Broeke 1987a. A full publication on the ceramic chronology is in preparation.

2 Archaeology in a sandy 'essen' landscape

The Meuse-Demer-Scheldt (MDS) region is a Pleistocene coversand plateau of approximately 250 kilometres (east-west) by 120 kilometres (north-south) (fig. 2.1). It covers the modern-day province of Noord-Brabant and the sandy parts of Dutch Limburg in the Netherlands, and the provinces of Antwerp and Limburg in Belgium. To the north of the sandy landscapes of the MDS region lies a broad zone with Holocene Meuse and Rhine sediments. The western edge of the study area is formed by the delta region of these rivers and the Scheldt river. To the south and east of the MDS region lie the loamy sand and loess regions of Belgium, southern Dutch Limburg and the German Rhineland. Together these features define the MDS region as a geographical entity.

With respect to geographical situation, long-term structure of the agrarian economy, and potential for archaeological study, the MDS region is comparable to the other coversand landscapes or *Geestlandschaften* that form a series along the south coast of the North Sea.[1] In this chapter I will present the main issues that set the parameters for archaeological research in a coversand landscape in general and the MDS region in particular. These are the geological and geomorphological situation, the general structure of the landscape in premodern times, and the history of archaeological investigations in the study area.

2.1 ASPECTS OF GEOLOGY AND GEOMORPHOLOGY

The highest part of the MDS region is situated in the southeast and rises a little over 100 metres above sea level. From there the terrain gently drops down to about sea level at the northwestern border. The main geomorphological element in most of this region consists of sand deposits that were laid down under cold and dry conditions during and after the last Ice Age.[2] They overlie older aeolian sands and riverine sand and gravel sediments.[3] The coversands are mostly between half a metre and one and a half metres thick and consist of fine to coarse sands, sometimes with an admixture of loam. They form low, elongated ridges following a general southwesterly to northeasterly direction. In the northwestern border area peat and marine clays are the dominant element. Even though strictly speaking this border area is part of the MDS region, it will not be taken into account in this study; very little is known about the prehistoric habitation of this area.[4]

Numerous small streams drain the area, flowing into the Demer to the south and the Meuse to the east and north. These are generally not deeply incised into the land, but they divide the landscape into numerous small and large sand plateaus. The course of the streams is determined by coversand ridges that run perpendicular to the general slope downwards towards the northwest, and the places where streams break

1 Cf. Roymans/Theuws 1999, 2-3, fig. 1.

2 These belong mostly to the Twente Formation (Doppert et al. 1975, 22). In some areas of the 'Centrale Slenk' coarse sands of the Sterksel Formation lie near the surface (Doppert et al. 1975, 31).

3 Part of the Eindhoven Formation (Doppert et al. 1975, 23).

4 Leenders 1989a; idem 1989b and 1996a.

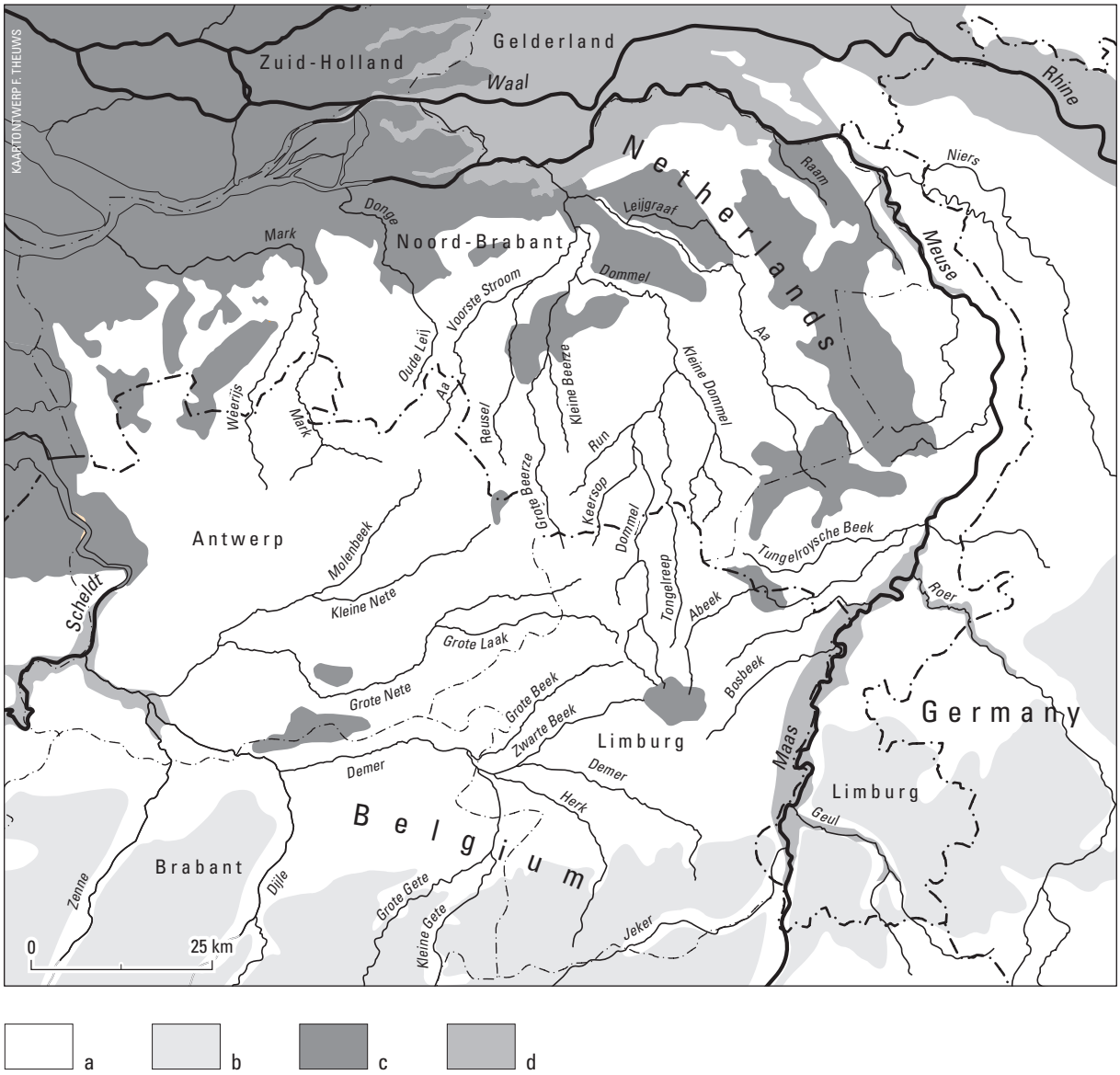

Fig. 2.1 General map of the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region, indicating national and provincial borders, rivers and streams. a) coversand landscapes; b) loess landscapes; c) reconstructed extent of peat in the Early Middle Ages; d) river sediments.

through a ridge. This results in a pattern of angular changes of direction of some of the streams. As a result of the minor differences in elevation and the barriers formed by some coversand ridges, parts of the MDS region are poorly drained. This results in marshy conditions and peat formation. The largest expanse of oligotrophic peat occurs in the Peel region in the northeastern area of the MDS region.[5] Drainage is hindered here by an area of tectonic uplift (the Peelhorst). It is clear that an area like the Peel dates back to late Pleistocene and early Holocene times, but in the Bronze and Iron Age it may have been less extensive and less monolithic than in premodern times. In the western part of Noord-Brabant, large peat moors have been removed by humans since the Middle Ages.[6] Together, these elements formed a landscape in which small differences in elevation, wet and dry zones, sandier and more loam-rich parts and peat moors

[5] With the exception of a few small areas, most of the peat of the Peel was extracted in the 19th and 20th centuries for fuel (Renes 1999, 374-379; De Bont 1993, 100-101).

[6] Leenders 1989a.

make up a finely differentiated geographical and vegetational mosaic. Overall characteristics, however, are mineralogically poor soils with limited natural fertility, a precipitation surplus which contributes to the eluviation of minerals from the topsoil, and a resulting vulnerability to soil degradation.

The geomorphological situation is to a certain extent also the result of anthropogenic factors. Activities such as the removal of the forest vegetation has affected soil formation processes and hydrological conditions. At least from the Early Iron Age onwards this led in extreme cases to the formation of local sand drifts.[7] Peat cutting in historic times has also contributed to large-scale landscape alterations. The implications of anthropogenic factors for the habitation patterns and agrarian regimes during the first millennium BC will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. One anthropogenic factor of much later date, however, needs to be discussed in this chapter, since it is vital for any understanding of spatial patterns and developments in prehistory to take into account its effects on the landscape. This is the late medieval and premodern practice of *plaggen* manuring and the consequent formation of *essen* (see 2.2).

The features mentioned so far define the MDS region as an entity not only in a geographical sense, but also in terms of the basic agrarian potential of the region before the introduction of artificial fertiliser. From the Late Neolithic onwards, agrarian regimes were always founded on a combination of arable farming and animal husbandry, in many periods with an emphasis on the latter.[8] Structural limits were placed on arable production levels by the amount of fertiliser that could be produced from manure, sods or domestic rubbish. At least from the Bronze Age onwards, agrarian systems in the sandy landscapes differed in significant ways from those of the fertile loess regions to the south. Even though late prehistoric house building traditions and settlement patterns are not well known in the loess zones,[9] it appears that byre-house traditions and dispersed, unstable settlement patterns were not of the same characteristic importance as in the sandy regions.

In general, conditions in acidic soils are not conducive to the preservation of uncharred organic materials. Faunal remains are fairly rare, but not absent in the archaeological material. Wells and pits that reach below the level of the groundwater table often contain small bone assemblages.[10] The situation is better where botanical remains are concerned. Carbonised macro-botanical remains are commonly encountered in settlement contexts. Locations with good pollen preservation conditions, such as peat deposits in depressions and stream valleys are fairly numerous.[11] Synthesising research on pollen spectra that aims at answering specific archaeological problems has started only recently.

2.2 THE PREMODERN LANDSCAPE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Early topographic maps of the late 18th and 19th century of the MDS region show a rural landscape that consists of two major elements: arable complexes (*essen*) with small pasture areas near the villages

7 Van Mourik 1988.

8 Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

9 Cf. Simons 1989 on habitation in the German loess region to the east of the MDS region. There is some evidence for the occurrence of byre-houses in Bavaria and Sachsen, dating to the Bronze Age (Engelhardt/Seliger 1988; Schefzik 1995).

10 Roymans 1990, table 5.4 lists four sites in the MDS region with significant faunal assemblages. To this can be added Oss-Ussen (Lauwerier/IJzereef 1998) and Meldert (Ervynck 1991).

11 Janssen 1972; Smit/Janssen 1983. Old podzolised soils below Bronze Age and Iron Age barrows have also yielded pollen records (Waterbolk 1954a; idem 1954b; Groenman-van Waateringe 1977; idem 1988; De Kort 2002).

Fig. 2.2 Segment of the *Topografische en militaire kaart van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* of circa 1850, around the village of Someren. The map shows the division of the 19th century landscape in cultivated zones around the villages and extensive wastelands with predominantly heath vegetation beyond. Kindly made available by the Free University Amsterdam cartographic department.

surrounded by much larger wastelands with a predominantly open heather vegetation (fig. 2.2). In chapter 5 the possible prehistoric origins of this bipartite division will be investigated. At this point I will confine myself to those aspects of the premodern landscape that have implications for the nature of archaeological remains and the potential for research.

Essen are arable complexes with an anthropogenic topsoil that have formed through centuries of spreading a mixture of animal manure and heath or grass sods (*plaggen*) over the fields.[12] Investigations of the pedogenesis of *essen* and artefacts contained in the lowest levels suggest that *plaggen* manuring first developed in the Lower Rhine Basin at the very end of the Middle Ages.[13] In the earlier literature dates in the Early Middle Ages have been proposed, but there are no concrete indications of this. In fact, there is now ample evidence from several *essen* excavations that those zones were densely inhabited until the 12th-13th century, before being turned into arable land.[14] Until the introduction of artificial fertiliser in the

[12] Pape 1975; Bieleman 1987, 604-614; Crijns/Kriellaars 1987, 41-44, 173-177.

[13] Spek 1992 (with references to the older literature) discusses the potential and problems of various methods for dating the origin of *plaggen* soils; Bieleman 1994; Groenewoudt et al. 1998, 155-169 for a recent archaeological study.

[14] De Bont 1993, 78-85; Schabbink 1999; Huijbers in prep.

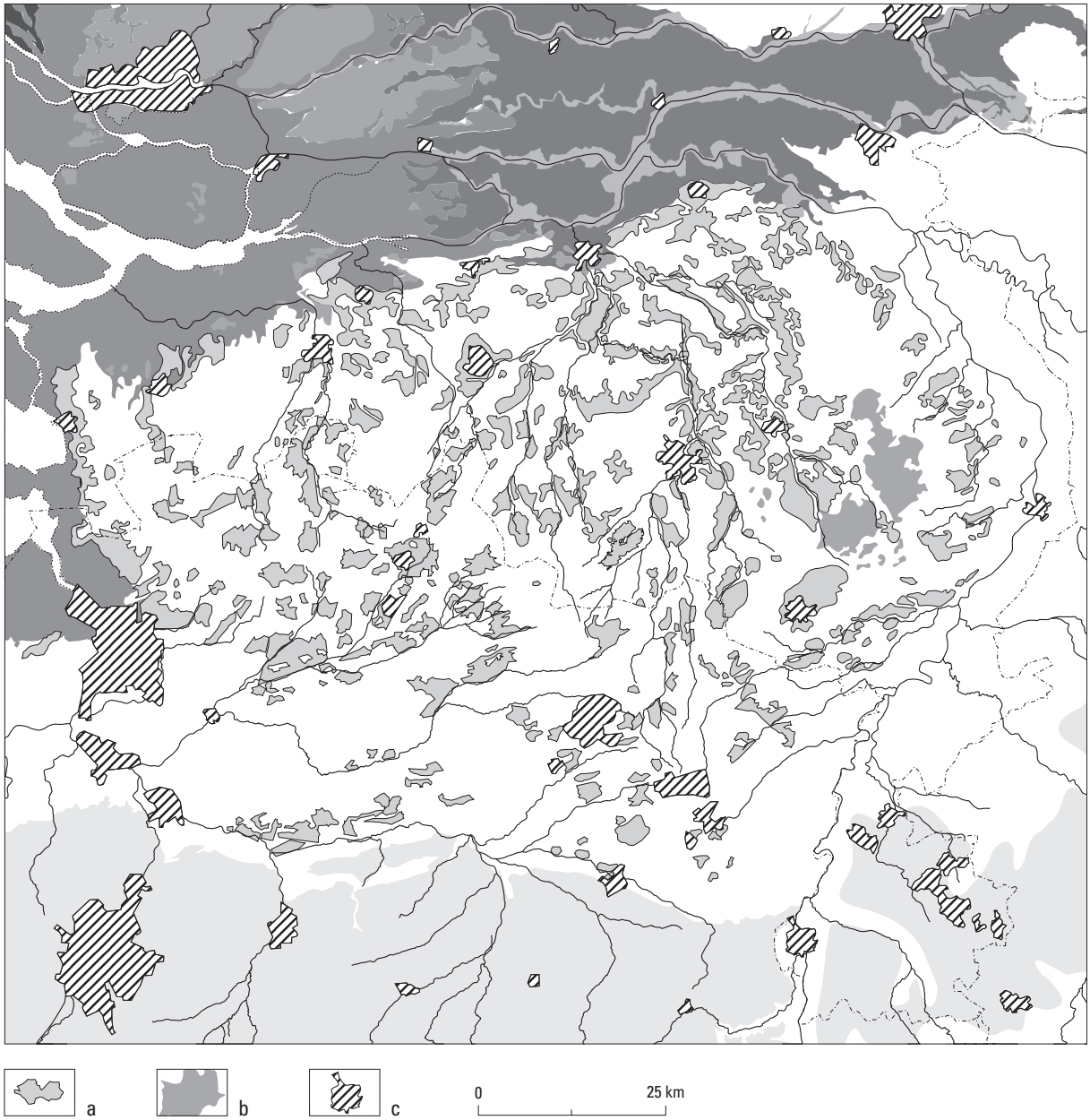

Fig. 2.3 Map of the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region, approximately indicating the locations of the old arable complexes (mainly *essen*) and built-up areas. a) arable complex (mostly of premodern origin); b) remaining extent of peat moors; c) towns.

19th century, *plaggen* manuring was the main technique for ensuring the continued fertility of the soil. *Plaggen* manuring is associated with the byre-house tradition. In historic times, cattle was kept in the byre throughout the winter.[15] The animals stood in a depressed area, on a layer of sods and manure. In the spring this mixture, which also contained sand that adhered to the sods, was spread out over the arable lands. Over time, this led to a gradual elevation of the surface, until a humus-rich layer of sometimes more than one metre thick developed. The *essen* present very different conditions for archaeological research than the premodern heathland zones. All above-ground prehistoric features under the *essen* were razed in the Roman period and especially after the Middle Ages. The original ground surface has been incorporated into the plough zone.

[15] Zimmermann 1999b.

The *essen* also act as 'blankets', however, covering and protecting the archaeological relics. This means that, even though the *essen* are generally quite rich in an archaeological sense, without excavations they remain blank zones on archaeological distribution maps. Survey techniques such as field walking or remote sensing are barely effective in this part of the landscape, as artefacts are not commonly brought to the surface by ploughing. Figure 2.3 shows the approximate extent of the *plaggen* soils in the MDS region. The wastelands surrounding the inhabited and cultivated zones covered much larger areas and, until a phase of large-scale reclamation activities in the 19th and early 20th centuries, consisted mostly of open heathlands and peat moors. The proportion of wasteland relative to cultivated land differed greatly per municipality, ranging from less than ten percent in the north-west of the study area to over 80 percent wasteland in the Kempen region.[16] Until the reclamations, the heathlands contained numerous prehistoric remains still standing above ground, in particular barrows of the Late Neolithic to Middle Bronze Age and urnfield cemeteries of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. This differentiation in the preservation and visibility of archaeological remains between the submodern heathlands and the *essen* has important consequences for micro-regional and regional investigations. Distribution patterns in the two areas cannot be compared with each other in a straightforward manner. As is described in the following section, the *essen* and heathlands zones both have their own research history.

2.3 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE LATE PREHISTORIC MEUSE-DEMER-SCHELDT REGION

Archaeological investigations in the MDS region started a good century and a half ago (including the earliest barrow excavations, see below), and have gone on with lesser or greater intensity since then. Over time a considerable archaeological data base has developed which is especially rich for the period between 1000 BC and AD 1300. It is somewhat remarkable, therefore, that there have been very few attempts until recently to produce synthesising accounts of the settlement history of the region. Some exceptions are dissertations by Frans Theuws on the Early Middle Ages and by Liesbeth Theunissen on the Middle Bronze Age cultures.[17] Others have focused on specific categories of material, such as a study by Desittere on the material culture of urnfields,[18] or have looked at the MDS region within a larger geographical framework.[19] Generally speaking, the history of archaeological work is therefore one of individual (salvage) excavations and several long-term micro-regional research projects.

Two periods can be distinguished: c. 1900 to 1960 and from c. 1960 to the present. Before 1960 fieldwork was almost completely restricted to the heathland zones, after which it shifted to the zones of arable lands. This is directly related to the extensive land reclamation activities that started in the first half of the 19th century and ended in the 1950s, and the development of large-scale building programmes in the old arable zones from the 1960s onwards.

16 Leenders 1996b, 143.

17 Theuws 1988; Theunissen 1999.

18 Desittere 1968.

19 Roymans 1990; syntheses on other periods: Fontijn 2002b; Van der Beek in prep.; Huijbers in prep.

During the 19th century large tracts of wasteland were reclaimed for forestry and agriculture.[20] Many barrows and urnfields that stood out in the flat and open heathland landscape were destroyed by these activities. Urn robbery took place on a considerable scale. Antiquarian interests incited a handful of individuals to excavate Bronze Age and Iron Age burial monuments, publish their findings and establish archaeological collections.[21] At this early stage, urns and grave goods were the centre of attention, and one cannot speak of systematic archaeological research. A catalogue compiled around the turn of the century listed as many as 121 urnfields for the Dutch and Belgian Kempen regions, although by then probably many more had been encountered in the reclamation activities.[22]

In 1908, archaeologists of the National Museum of Antiquities (Rijksmuseum voor Oudheden, RMO) recorded for the first time the ditches surrounding prehistoric grave monuments while excavating an urnfield at Valkenswaard.[23] Even though this excavation exposed a very small area, and the documentation is not entirely reliable, it represents the first systematic excavation in the study area. In 1909 and 1914 more extensive excavations took place in Riethoven and Bergen.[24] During the 1920s and 1930s excavation techniques and recording methods greatly improved, but because the topsoil had to be removed by hand it was impossible to expose large areas. Institutional interest was also scant, and in comparison to the sandy regions of Drenthe in the northern Netherlands the number of excavations was small and the extent of the excavated areas restricted.[25] The rescue excavations to the south of Oss provide a fitting example of the many missed opportunities of this period. During construction activities in 1933 an exceptionally rich grave with a bronze Hallstatt C situla, a sword, and horse gear came to light.[26] Soon after, a few narrow trenches were dug in order to establish the diameter of the monumental barrow (52 metres), but no attempt was made to excavate the barrow completely, nor any of the surrounding area. It was not until 1997 to 1999 that further research took place, at which time it was established that the monument had a complex history beginning with a smaller barrow in the Middle Bronze Age and incorporated a Late Bronze Age elongated post-structure.[27] It also became clear that the barrow had been situated within an urnfield. Even though valuable additional evidence could still be collected, soil disturbance since the 1930s precluded a thorough investigation of the context of the 'princely' grave. Some other urnfields excavated in the pre-war period were investigated in more detail, especially those at Best, Knegsel (fig. 4.12) and Bergeyk.[28] These excavations yielded important information on the structure and main variations in burial ritual and grave monuments. Apart from the RMO, which was the most active archaeological institution in the pre-war period in the southern Netherlands, A.E. van Giffen of the Biological-Archaeological Institute of the University of Groningen (BAI) and his student Willems carried out several of these excavations.

During World War II and the years that followed, excavation activities were very limited. In Noord-Brabant post-war fieldwork began again in earnest with Willem Glasbergen's investigations between 1948 and 1951 at Toterfout-Halve Mijl of a large cluster of Bronze Age barrows and part of an Early Iron Age

[20] Renes 1999, 383-399 on the reclamations in northern and central Limburg; De Bont 1993, 97-103; Leenders 1996b on those in Noord-Brabant.

[21] E.g. Hermans 1840/1841; idem 1865; Panken 1845; Stroobant 1903; idem 1905.

[22] Comhaire 1894, 64-73.

[23] Valkenswaard-Het Gegraaf: Evelein 1909.

[24] Riethoven-Einderhei: Evelein 1910; Bergen-De Hamert: Holwerda 1914.

[25] Cf. figure 4.12 (chapter 4) for an example of a commonly used strategy to investigate urnfields through narrow, radiating trenches.

[26] Holwerda 1934; Modderman 1964.

[27] Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 85-90.

[28] Best-Aarlesche Hei: Willems 1935, Knegsel-Knegselse Hei: Braat 1936; Bergeyk-Witrijt: Van Giffen 1937. Appendix 1 lists all urnfields in the MDS region known from find reports and excavations.

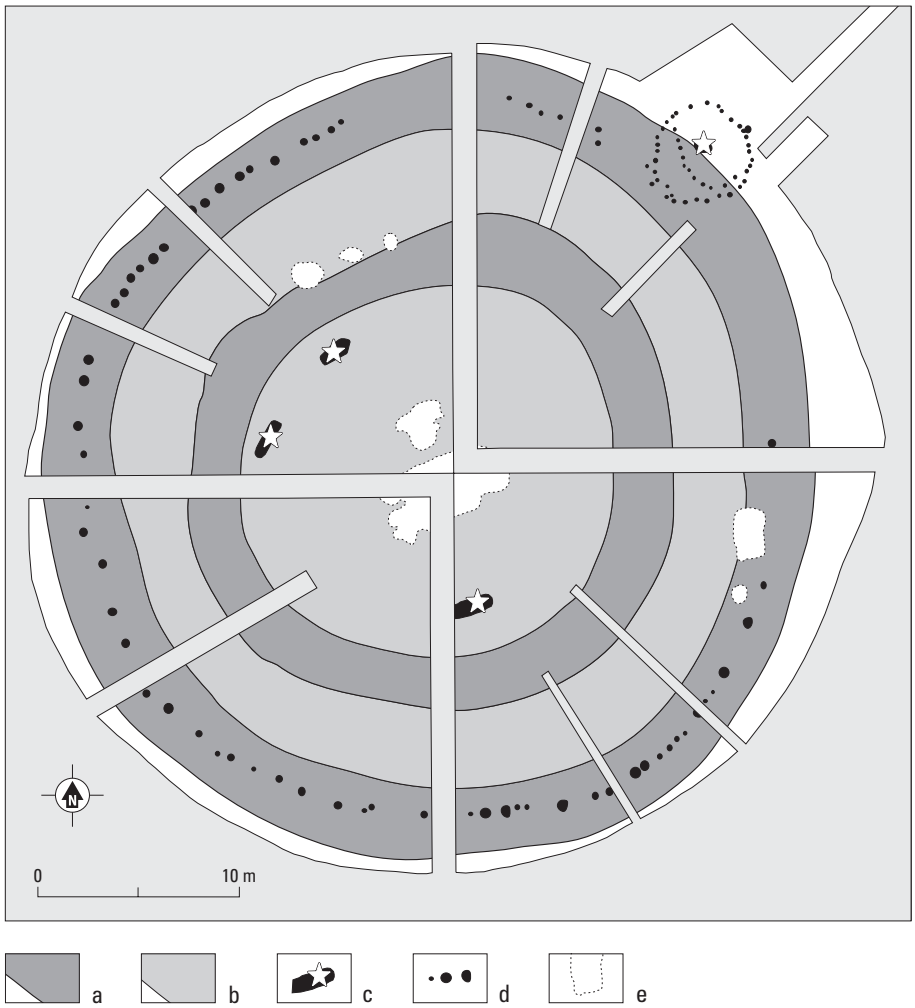

Fig. 2.4 Hoogeloon-Zwartenberg. Excavation plan of Middle Bronze Age disc-and-bell barrow, excavated with the quadrant method. After Theunissen 1999, fig. 3.24. a) ditch; b) bank/barrow; c) cremation burial in tree-trunk coffin; d) postholes; e) recent disturbance.

urnfield.[29] He introduced several methodological innovations to barrow archaeology in the southern Netherlands, including the use of the quadrant method (fig. 2.4), section drawings, and the analysis of cremated remains.[30] Somewhat later, in the years 1959-1964, the excavators of the important urnfield Neerpelt 'De Roosen' in the Belgian Kempen could profit from these advances in excavation techniques.[31] While the RMO was no longer active in the study area as an excavating institution in the post-war period, the newly founded State Service for Archaeological Investigations (Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek, ROB) started to carry out research from 1947 onwards, with renewed excavations at Valkenswaard and Veldhoven.[32]

The 1950s represent a flourishing phase of research, in particular with respect to Bronze Age mortuary archaeology.[33] But at the same time heathland reclamations became less and less frequent and came

[29] Glasbergen 1954; Theunissen 1999, 20-22.

[30] Glasbergen 1954, 23-31; cremated remains: Krumbein in Glasbergen 1954, 126-128.

[31] Roosens/Beex 1960; idem 1961 and 1962; Van Impe/Beex/Roosens 1973.

[32] Valkenswaard: Brunsting/Verwers 1975; Veldoven-Heibloem: Modderman/Louwe Kooijmans 1966.

[33] Theunissen 1999, fig. 3.6.

almost to a complete standstill towards the later part of the 1950s, seriously diminishing the possibilities of conducting research in the premodern heathland zones. Archaeology in the MDS region before the 1960s had been purely an archaeology of monumental cemeteries; prehistoric farmsteads and settlements were still almost completely unknown.

The history of fieldwork up to 1960 parallels the development of an archaeological research tradition in the Netherlands.[34] In the first part of the century research concentrated on documenting, ordering and dating material culture, especially related to burial customs. Resemblances in the material culture with that of neighbouring regions were traced and explained in term of ethnic and cultural affinities.[35] Starting in the 1930s, methods borrowed from physical geography and biology increasingly became part of fieldwork and analysis. Archaeology, in this tradition, was a matter of studying ancient societies in their environmental setting. A founding father in this respect was undoubtedly Van Giffen, who was trained as a biologist and served as the director of the BAI in Groningen from 1920 onwards.[36] According to Van Giffen, a reconstruction of burial rituals based on a detailed study of the pedological context of burial mounds could provide a more reliable understanding of the nature of prehistoric communities than typo-chronological studies of material culture.[37]

The natural-scientific approach became stronger in the first decades after the war, with the development of palynological, palaeo-ethno-botanical and zoo-archaeological research methods, as well as the introduction of radiocarbon dating. In the Netherlands, the natural-scientific approach was largely integrated with the culture-historical research tradition, with its emphasis on typo-chronological studies of pottery and grave monuments, and interpretations of cultural change in terms of migration and diffusion.[38] It is illustrative that simultaneously with Glasbergen's work on Bronze Age funerary practices, H.T. Waterbolk, another student of Van Giffen, wrote a dissertation exploring the potential of palynology in the archaeology of Pleistocene landscapes.[39] In Belgium, on the other hand, archaeology was only marginally influenced by biology and physical geography.

In a lecture held in 1947 Van Giffen introduced the term '*cultureel streekdiagram'* (a diagram presenting an overview of material culture styles and habitation patterns) to describe the way he believed regional research ought to be conducted. By investigating the appearance and disappearance of cultural phenomena on a regional scale it would be possible to trace and explain regional particularities as well as resemblances with other regions.[40] In general terms this described the objectives of much of the Dutch post-war archaeological research, including, in their initial stages, the micro-regional research projects in the MDS region (see below).

In hindsight, one can say that the period of heathland archaeology resulted in an extensive catalogue of Bronze Age and Iron Age cemeteries, the development of systematic excavation methods and an ecologically- oriented culture-historical research tradition. Systematic research took place only at a small number of urnfields, but none were excavated completely, and the areas between the still visible mounds were usually not investigated. Information on the extent and internal structure of the urnfields that is now considered essential was therefore not collected. Moreover, analysis of the cremated remains had not yet been sufficiently developed. Settlements, without doubt situated in the same geographical zones as the cemeteries, had almost entirely escaped attention.

34 Slofstra 1994.

35 Holwerda 1918; Willems 1935.

36 Slofstra 1994, 12.

37 Van Giffen 1930, 184-186.

38 Culture-historical studies in the strict sense of the term continued to be written, especially in Belgium and Germany: Kersten 1948; Desittere 1968; De Laet 1974.

39 Glasbergen 1954; Waterbolk 1954a; idem 1954b. The latter is a palynological contribution to Glasbergen's study.

40 Van Giffen 1947, 504-505.

2.3.2 THE PERIOD OF 'ESSEN'-ARCHAEOLOGY

During the 1950s heathland reclamations came to an end, and with it the archaeological focus on the monumental barrow urnfields situated in those heathlands. Archaeological fieldwork gradually shifted to the old arable zones around the traditional villages, where the construction of housing estates and industrial areas began to take place at an increasingly fast pace.[41] Sand extraction formed another major threat to the archaeological remains under the *essen*.

Between 1960 and 1967 excavations were carried out at Haps, at first by the ROB and later by the Institute for Prehistory of the University of Leiden (IPL) that had been founded in 1962.[42] Several Middle Bronze Age barrows, an Early and Middle Iron Age urnfield, and a Middle and Late Iron Age settlement complex were brought to light here. This project was of great significance, not only because it provided archaeologists for the first time with a large number of farmhouse ground plans and the material culture of an Iron Age settlement, but also because it revealed the problems and potential of '*essen*' archaeology. Unstratified remains of several periods were preserved in the same location. Although the ancient surface layer had been ploughed out, the medieval/post-medieval anthropogenic topsoil had effectively protected the prehistoric and Roman period sub-soil features from destructive activities. The topsoil in these *essen*-excavations was removed by machine, demonstrating for the first time in the southern Netherlands the potential of large-scale exposures.

On the whole, this potential was explored only to a limited extent during the 1960s and 1970s. Apart from the excavations in Haps, the investigations at Hilvarenbeek by the ROB and the IPL, and at St.-Oedenrode by the ROB are worth mentioning. At Hilvarenbeek the remains of two Iron Age farmhouses, and a large number of granaries were found, partly overlying a Late Bronze Age urnfield (figs. 4.4, 4.30).[43] At St.-Oedenrode sand quarrying enabled the ROB, in co-operation with a local amateur archaeologist, to document archaeological traces dating from the Middle Bronze Age to the Middle Ages. A significant portion of a rather severely disturbed Late Bronze and Early Iron Age urnfield was excavated, as well as the remains of several farmyards dating to the same period.[44] Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age house building traditions had been practically unknown in the MDS region until then. Based on the combination of an urnfield and its associated settlement remains it was possible to demonstrate that the community that buried its dead in the cemetery was much smaller than the number of excavated farmsteads suggested.[45] This led to the conclusion that the single-phase farmsteads were inhabited consecutively rather than simultaneously, something that was impossible to deduce from the scarce and poorly datable pottery associated with the houses. Since then, the periodic relocation of farmsteads has proven to be one of the main characteristics of the Urnfield period settlement patterns.

Two major regional research projects started in the 1970s and continue to the present day: the Kempen project (later called the South Netherlands project) of the Archaeological Institute of the Free University (AIVU) and the Institute for Pre- and Protohistory of the University of Amsterdam (IPP),[46]

41 A small number of urnfields were investigated in the former heathlands after 1960: Goirle (Verwers 1966c), Bergeyk-De Paal (Modderman 1967), Kaulille (Engels/Van Impe 1984; idem 1985), Klein-Ravels (Annaert/Van Impe 1985). In Belgium, this tradition has continued longer than in the Dutch part.

42 Haps-Kamps Veld, Verwers 1972. The IPL has since been renamed the Faculty of Archaeology.

43 Verwers 1975.

44 Van der Sanden 1981; Van Bodegraven 1991, with more references.

45 Van der Sanden 1981, 326. Four Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age farmhouses came to light in an area of restricted size, suggesting that there were many more to be found in the vicinity.

46 The IPP has recently changed its name to the Amsterdam Archaeological Centre (AAC).

and the Maaskant project of the IPL. The history of these projects has been described recently in two publications and it is therefore enough to summarise the main points here.[47]

The Kempen project began as a one-man research programme, when in 1974 Jan Slofstra of the AIVU started a survey in the region to the southwest of Eindhoven, the area known as Dutch Kempen.[48] Through a combination of field walking and making inventories of the collections of local amateur archaeologists and museums he hoped to be able to reconstruct a regional habitation history, and to develop an empirical basis for the study of socio-cultural processes. Excavations were not part of the original research design. It soon became clear, however, that any kind of field walking-based survey method encounters major problems in the sandy *essen* landscapes, as a result of the blanketing effect of the *essen* (see above). From 1978 onwards, the research strategy shifted to include excavations, primarily of archaeological sites of late prehistoric, Roman and medieval date. Around this time, the Kempen project became a combined effort of the AIVU and IPP. In the early 1980s the main projects involved a Roman period villa complex at Hoogeloon and a medieval settlement at Dommelen.[49] Iron Age remains were encountered at Bladel,[50] for example, but it was not until the later 1980s that excavations by members of the Kempen project began to concentrate specifically on the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age.

When the Kempen project was first conceived, Slofstra was influenced by the processual approach that was being advocated in Anglo-American archaeology. He explicitly chose a systems approach as a way to conceptualise societies and cultural processes.[51] In comparison with the way in which most archaeological research was conducted at the time, whereby research goals and interpretative frameworks remained largely implicit, the approach advocated by the Kempen project represented a considerable change.[52] In other respects, however, it remained firmly connected to the culture-historical tradition.[53] The term historical-anthropological archaeology was introduced to describe the theoretical approach of the Kempen project, although this has never resulted in a consistent theoretical programme shared by all the project members. The main elements were the use of anthropological concepts in combination with a strong emphasis on the specific historical context of cultural processes.

The research of the South Netherlands project, as the Kempen project gradually came to be called, received a major boost in 1989, when a *Pionier* research group was established at the IPP to study elite and power structures in the Northwest European Plain in the period 1000 BC to AD 1000. Initially, important themes were social structure and political economy, with studies on elite exchange networks and the incorporation of the MDS region into larger political entities.[54] In the course of the 1990s, interests among the members of this group have widened to include the social and ideational dimensions of the landscape and their long-term transformations.[55]

The sandy region of the southern Netherlands functioned as a kind of laboratory in which salvage excavations were carried out to investigate specific problems. Fieldwork methodology was adapted as new research themes required different strategies. While fieldwork had initially concentrated on the excavation of sites dating to a specific period, shifts to an interest in the long-term transformations of the landscape made it necessary to broaden the scope of the investigations from single sites to micro-regions. Areas in

47 Kempen project: Roymans 1996a; Maaskant project: Fokkens 1996.

48 Slofstra 1982b.

49 Slofstra 1982c; Van Regteren Altena 1982; Theuws 1988, 221-259; Theuws/Verhoeven/Van Regteren-Altena 1988.

50 Roymans 1982.

51 Slofstra 1982a.

52 Comparable developments took place at the time in the Assendelver Polders project (Brandt et al. 1987).

53 Slofstra 1982a, 33-43; Roymans 1996a, 231-235.

54 Publications resulting from the *Pionier* project include Roymans/Theuws 1991; Derks 1998; Diepeveen-Jansen 2001; Bazelmans 1999; Hiddink 1999.

55 E.g. Roymans 1995a; idem 1996a; Derks 1997; Theuws/Roymans 1999.

which habitation has not left dense traces, such as the stream valleys and moors are now con- sidered of comparable importance for studying the fossil landscape as settlements and cemeteries. Examples of long-term research projects that are especially relevant for the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age are those at Someren and Weert.[56] Over the course of a number of years, areas of over 15 hectares have been excavated at both sites, exposing archaeological remains from the Bronze Age up to the Late Middle Ages.

The Maaskant project of the IPL has traditionally focused its excavations on the northern parts of the municipality of Oss. Since 1976 housing estates and industrial zones have been developed there in the former arable lands of the town. In line with the customary research traditions of the time, major aims of the project in its early years were to reconstruct the history of habitation and to study the relationship between habitation patterns and ecological aspects of the environment.[57] Fieldwork during the period 1976-1982 was carried out mainly by digging trenches along the planned road network. Larger exposures were made in areas where occupational traces were particularly dense. As a result of this strategy, the Late Iron Age and Roman period received most attention, as it is in those periods that settlement remains tend to occur as clustered groups. From 1982 onwards, when the direction of the project lay in the hands of Wijnand van der Sanden and later Harry Fokkens, the emphasis gradually shifted to uncovering larger parts of the fossil landscape. On the one hand, this was in accordance with a growing interest in the development of settlement systems and wider socio-cultural processes, in particular romanisation.[58] An example is the excavation of the enclosed Roman-period settlement of Oss-Westerveld.[59] On the other hand, it followed the realisation that this was the only method for locating elements of the dispersed settlement patterns of the Bronze Age and Iron Age.[60]

The prehistoric remains found at Oss between 1976 and 1986 have been published by Kees Schinkel.[61] On the basis of a large number of farmhouse plans, storage structures, pits and wells he demonstrated in some detail how a small number of dispersed farmsteads occupied the area throughout most of the Iron Age, and periodically moved within a fairly small settlement territory. During the Late Iron Age farmsteads were rebuilt increasingly close to the existing farmsteads, leading in the Early Roman period to nucleated settlements with a stable location. The settlements of the Roman period (discovered before 1993) have been published by Dieke Wesselingh.[62] As Fokkens describes in his overview of the history of the Maaskant project, research goals have shifted in the course of the second decade of excavations at Oss to studying the integral archaeological landscape, and how it was formed by aspects of economy, social structure, and cosmology.[63]

In the Belgian part of the study area, the main excavating institution has been the National Service for Excavations (Nationale Dienst voor Opgravingen, NDO).[64] At Donk a Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age urnfield, together with settlement traces of the Middle and Late Iron Age were excavated in the years 1977-1986.[65] Finds at Neerharen-Rekem included a Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age urnfield, Late Iron Age farmhouses and other settlement traces (fig. 4.29).[66] Worth mentioning is also a Late Iron Age enclosure with a rectangular moat-and-rampart system that was investigated at Kontich (fig. 4.17).[67]

56 Roymans/Kortlang 1993; Roymans 1995c; Roymans/Tol 1996a; Roymans/Tol/Hiddink 1998; Kortlang 1999.

57 Van der Sanden 1988.

58 Van der Sanden 1988, 117; Wesselingh 2000, 3.

59 Van der Sanden 1987a; idem 1988; Wesselingh 2000.

60 Fokkens 1996, 201.

61 Schinkel 1994 (Dutch); idem 1998 (English). A comprehensive publication on the excavations after 1986 is in preparation (Fokkens in prep.).

62 Wesselingh 2000.

63 Fokkens 1996, 204.

64 Since the federalisation of Belgium, its Flemish successor, the Institute for Archaeological Heritage (IAP) has continued to work in the Belgian part of the MDS region.

65 Van Impe 1980b; idem 1983a, 1983b and 1991; Van Impe/Strobbe/Vynckier 1985.

66 De Boe 1985; idem 1986.

67 Annaert 1993; idem 1995/1996 and 1996b.

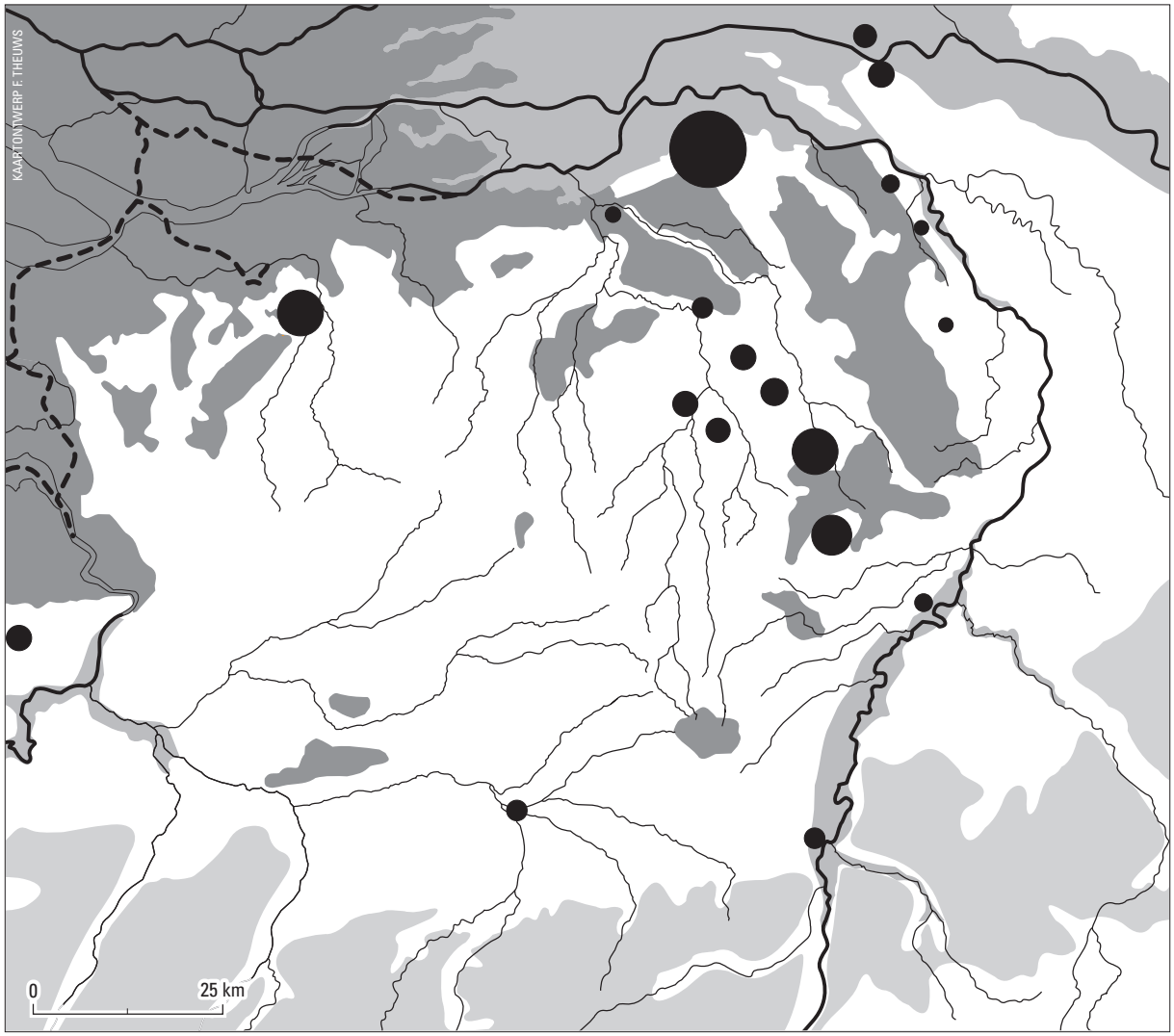

Fig. 2.5 The Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region, indicating the size of the exposed surface area at major excavations (until 2000). The map includes only excavations with a total exposed surface area of two hectares or more, and for which.

2.4 THE MEUSE–DEMER–SCHELDT REGION AS A RESEARCH AREA

It is necessary to explain briefly in which sense of the term I take the MDS region to be the research or study area of this project. As this is a synthesis based largely on published data, it is dependent on well-investigated and published sites and micro-regions. These are clearly not distributed evenly over the study area. Map 2.5 shows the main excavations with significant remains of the Bronze Age and Iron Age. There are distinct concentrations in the northeastern part of Noord-Brabant, the focus of the research projects of several universities. Excavations in Belgium have tended to be less extensive, especially in comparison to the large-scale settlement research of recent decades in the Netherlands.

There are signs that funding for salvage archaeology in Belgium is slowly becoming more available in the context of large infrastructural projects, but it is too early at present for concrete results to be available.[68] The results of this state of research is that a disproportionate amount of information comes from a relatively small number of sites and regions, in particular the areas around Oss, Someren, Weert, and the area to the southwest of Eindhoven. In addition, much valuable information comes from the numerous small-scale excavations that have been carried out throughout the research area, but these are in themselves too restricted for a thorough analysis of the questions raised. This differentiated pattern of research intensities creates a strong bias in regional distribution patterns. However, I do not consider this to be a major problem, since, as was explained in the previous chapter, I am primarily interested in local and micro-regional aspects of prehistoric habitation. The research area is therefore not defined as that area for which a coherent and balanced picture can be drawn, based on full coverage of the archaeological data. Rather, it is taken to be that area for which a reasonable case can be made that the patterns and processes traceable in the most intensively investigated micro-regions are more or less the same throughout the whole region. Undoubtedly, more detailed studies will reveal differences in material culture, settlement patterns or cultural practices between parts of the MDS region, and some of these are discussed in this study. But on the whole, from a geographical as well as a cultural viewpoint, the differences within the research area tend to be smaller than those between the MDS region and the neighbouring areas. Related to this definition of the research area is the fact that I do not take the rivers that bound the MDS region as strict borders. Evidence from sites in similar landscapes directly outside the region will be incorporated where I feel this is relevant. Examples come from the sandy areas to the east of the Meuse in Dutch Limburg, from the Wijchen-Nijmegen area and the sandy region directly to the west of the Scheldt river in East Flanders.

[68] E.g. De Clercq/Van Rechem 1999; Opsteyn et al. 1999; Verbeek/Maes/Vanwesenbeeck 2001. A large-scale project directly outside the MDS region was carried out by the University of Gent at Sint-Gillis-Waas in East Flanders. It yielded Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman-period traces (Bourgeois et al. 1996; Bourgeois et al. 1997; Bourgeois/Hageman 1998).

3 The house and its inhabitants

3.1 AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON HOUSES AND HOUSEHOLDS

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

To say that a house is more than a physical shelter against the elements is simply pointing out the obvious. Houses are in many ways at the heart of social and cultural life, both in non-modern societies and in present-day, western society; they '*constitute culturally significant space of the highest order*'.[1] In contemporary northwestern Europe houses are embedded in a web of diverse notions including home, family, privacy, investment, status and the like. The significance of houses in other societies may well be based on wholly different ideas, but houses are never socially or symbolically neutral. Le Roy Ladurie notes about the 13th century Pyrenean village of Montaillou that

…the best way to understand Montaillou is to abandon temporarily the problems of social stratification within it and go straight to the basic cell which, multiplied a few dozen times, went to make up the village. This basic cell was none other than the peasant family, embodied in the permanence of a house and in the daily life of a group co-resident under the same roof. In local language this entity was called an ostal*; and in the Latin of the Inquisition files it was called a* hospicium *or, more often, a* domus*. It should be noted that the words* ostal, domus *and* hospicium *all and inextricably mean both family and house. The term* familia *is practically never used in the Fournier register. It never crosses the lips of the inhabitants of Montaillou themselves, for whom the family of flesh and blood and the house of wood, stone or daub were one and the same thing.*[2]

The ethnographic literature is rich with examples that show how houses are invested with social and symbolic meanings in a great variety of ways. The identification of a house with its inhabitants is a recurrent element in the ethnographic literature (particularly but not only in societies that lack a commercial house market), but it is only one possible aspect. Houses can be reflections and structuring features of socio-cosmological orders.[3] They can provide the context for a particular 'dwelling-habitus' consisting of cultural ideas and values that structure daily life in and around the house.[4] As a result of its materiality, visibility and symbolic potential, a house can also be used profitably for representing power and social status, or to engage in social relationships, competitive or otherwise, with other individuals and groups.[5]

1 Ellen 1986, 3.

2 Le Roy Ladurie 1980, 24.

3 E.g. Waterson 1990, 94 on the cosmological significance of the orientation towards the cardinal directions of the houses of the Toraja of Sulawesi. Parker Pearson/Richards 1994a, 10-18 for other examples. Cf. 3.1.2.

4 E.g. Århem (1991) on male/female, private/public, day/night oppositions underlying the spatial organisation of Maasai homesteads, or Bourdieu's famous study of the Kabyle house (1973; also 1977).

5 Hodder 1990; Çevik 1995; P. Thomas 1998; Vellinga 2000.

If social and symbolic meanings are a fundamental and universal aspect of houses, several questions arise with regard to the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Which meanings did houses have in the later prehistory of the MDS region, and how did these meanings change over time? And, through which practices were houses invested with meaning and how did these meanings structure the lives of the inhabitants?

Anthropology offers not only illustrative ethnographic examples, but also theoretical insights that are useful aids in studying these questions. Cultural anthropology incorporates several separate fields of research that focus on houses and households. Demography and kinship studies study household form and size; economic anthropology focuses on the household as a unit of production and consumption. Architecture-based studies tend to neglect the inhabitants of houses and write about construction technology, adaptations to climatic extremes or, alternatively, about the house as a microcosm.[6] Only recently have there been attempts at developing more holistic approaches that integrate these fields, and that view the house and its inhabitants within a single analytical framework. For archaeologists this is an exciting development, as it opens up perspectives on the prehistoric people behind the postholes and wall foundations of the houses we excavate. It is not the aim of this introduction to provide an exhaustive review of the achievements and flaws of the different bodies of anthropological theory.[7] But in order to explain the perspective on houses and households that is proposed in this chapter, some remarks need to be made about the different fields of research from which that perspective takes its inspiration.

In this introduction and the following sections of this chapter reference is made to a number of ethnographic and ethno-archaeological case studies. This is done for a specific, restricted purpose, along the lines of Peter Ucko's phrase 'to widen the horizon of the interpreter'.[8] Domestic architecture as an object of archaeological study has long been informed by functionalist and ecologically-oriented perspectives. By looking at living societies studied by anthropologists and ethno-archaeologists it may be possible to change our mindset and to begin thinking about the social, structuring and processual dimensions of domestic architecture. Not using ethnographically-derived analogies as a means to support claims about the past, I am little concerned with direct historical links between my examples and the Bronze Age and Iron Age of the MDS region. With one exception, the argumentation tries to stay clear of a reliance on ethnographic examples. The exception concerns the assumption of a mutual identification of dwelling place and inhabitants, perhaps as marked and strongly felt as in Montaillou, perhaps as something 'that goes without saying'.[9] The existence of an idea of that sort cannot be proven or tested for the prehistoric communities with which I am concerned, nor is it easy to gain an idea about its universality from the anthropological literature. My justification for using this assumption comes from theories on material culture and exchange that stress the commensurability of subject and object; objects are indissolubly interwoven with the people that produce, use or exchange them.[10]

6 Carsten/Hugh-Jones 1995a, 4.

7 Cf. for example Yanagisako 1979; Netting/Wilk/Arnould 1984; Sabean 1990 on household and family studies. Domestic architecture has been the focus of a large number of collections of published articles: Izikowitz/Sørensen 1982; Bourdier/Alsayyad 1989; Kent 1990; Parker Pearson/Richards 1994b; Carsten/Hugh-Jones 1995b; Benjamin 1995.

8 Ucko 1969, 262; cf. Van Reybrouck 2000, chapter 3, esp. 127.

9 Bloch 1992.

10 Cf. Miller 1994 for a brief overview of current thinking about material culture; Bazelmans 1999 (esp. 13-36) for a discussion of the historical development of the anthropology of gift exchange; cf. Appadurai 1986; Weiner 1992.

3.1.2 HOUSES AND THE SOCIO-COSMOLOGICAL ORDER

Perhaps best known among the different approaches to the study of domestic architecture is the one that seeks to understand the cosmological principles underlying construction, spatial organisation or decorative schemes of houses.[11] A classic example is Cunningham's study of Atoni houses.[12] The dwelling there stands in a cognitive opposition to the sun. The entrance should therefore not face east or west, as this would allow the sun to enter the house. Inside, a fire is kept alight at all times, giving the house its own 'sun'. Other organising categories include right / left, high / low and centre / periphery. Spatial arrangements are based on these categories, but more importantly the social relationships of the people who inhabit the house are constituted through reference to the cosmological principles. Women are associated with the inner part of the house and the left-hand side, men with the outer part and the right-hand side. Guests that are agnates of the household head are entertained in the inner section of the house, affines or other guests in more peripheral parts. Parents sleep on a platform, children on mats on the ground. Heirlooms are stored high up in the attic, which is rich in supernatural connotations. From an archaeological viewpoint it is interesting to note that elaborate as the symbolic system underlying Atoni house may be, there is very little in its physical appearance that would suggest this to an outsider. Much of the symbolism revolves around the door, the hearth, and water jar – elements of the house that are functionally essential as well.

Although houses can be seen as central elements in the constitution of the socio-cosmological order – and thus an archaeological source with a rich potential for studying ancient world views – the situation is not as straightforward as one would like. There are several complicating matters. Firstly, a society's world view is not an abstract, reified and unchanging set of ideas that is 'applied' to houses. Both are constituted in each other. The built environment is as much a result of a world view as it is a factor in the formation of that world view.[13] Secondly, an implicit assumption is often made in structuralist studies such as the one by Cunningham that the symbolic meanings of houses are of a single form, that they express one order which is understood and accepted by all in society in the same way and at all times.[14] This leads to a static view, and there are both theoretical and empirical grounds for doubting that reality is as uniform and stable. As several authors have noted, the symbolic meanings of domestic space are not inherent in its organisation, but are constantly created and reproduced through the social practices that take place there.[15]

A conceptualisation of material culture, and houses in particular, that allows for multiple readings and acknowledges that symbolic meanings are dependent on the contexts of time and actors, will lead to a more complex understanding of the social and cultural roles of houses in society. A way to understand how differentiated meanings come about and how they in turn affect the behaviour and perception of the inhabitants of a house is to incorporate the architectural structure and the human dimension into a single analytical framework.

11 Green 1999.

12 Cunningham 1964.

13 Rapoport 1976; idem 1982; Van Beek 1990, 93.

14 Ellen 1986.

15 Bourdieu 1977; Moore 1986; Ellen 1986; Van Beek 1990; Nas/Prins 1991, 6.

3.1.3 THE HOUSE AS A SOCIAL CATEGORY

Before turning to a discussion of an understanding of houses that incorporates both architecture and people, it is necessary to dwell briefly on a conception of houses that was developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss.[16] His focus is on houses as a form of social organisation, and while the architectural dimension has not systematically entered his work in this context, much of the recent, holistic work on domestic buildings has been inspired by his ideas. According to Lévi-Strauss there are cognatic societies across the globe whose social organisation recognises so-called Houses (capitalised to distinguish them from the architectural component). The best known examples are perhaps the noble Houses of European history, but similar social groupings are known from the Americas, southeast Asia and Japan. A core characteristic according to the definition of Lévi-Strauss is that it is an institution that acts as a corporate body in a hierarchically ordered society. It exists as long as it is able to pass along its name and wealth – including fixed and movable property, but also titles and rights – down a real or imaginary line. The House is '*considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or affinity, and, most often, both*'.[17] In other words, a House can be held together both through descent and through marriage alliance, and in this sense 'House societies' are fundamentally different from those with unilineal descent systems.

Lévi-Strauss himself has done little to work out the details of his theory (many of his ideas being published in the form of lecture notes), but his ideas have inspired research on notions of houses as central elements of indigenous social categorisations.[18] In this further work the original definition has often been altered and made more flexible. Scholars have demonstrated, for example, that also in largely egalitarian societies one can often recognise Houses as social entities with multi-generational continuity that pass on wealth.[19] More importantly, some have argued that the interconnections between the social house and the architectural house need to be taken into account.[20] They often fall within one and the same cognitive category, as was brought out so forcefully in the Montaillou example with which this chapter started. Several elements follow from the notion of an interconnectedness of house and inhabitants. This is firstly that a house can have an active part in the constitution of individuals that inhabit it; it provides the inhabitants with part of their social identity. It is interesting in this respect that in the northern Netherlands a tradition survived until recently of naming a farmstead after its founder, and vice versa, of families taking their name from their farmstead or estate.[21]

Secondly, the dwelling place has a function in the definition of the inhabitants as a social group.[22] This group never exists to the exclusion of other kinds of social groups, and its boundaries may not be fixed or always very clear. But nevertheless, the very act of living together in a house will create social boundaries and set that group apart from other social bodies. Within the household – as this group can be conveniently defined – there are often potentially conflicting interests based on differences in origin, gender and age. At the same time, the household is often seen as a basic social unit in the wider social constellation.

Thirdly, because of its physicality and constant presence in the lives of the inhabitants and the other members of the local community, a house provides the inhabitants with a suitable medium for social

16 Lévi-Strauss 1982; idem 1984, 189-241 and 1991; P. Thomas 1996.

17 Lévi-Strauss 1982, 174.

18 E.g. Waterson 1990, 138-166; Kuper 1993; Carsten/Hugh-Jones 1995b; Green 1999.

19 Sellato 1987; Waterson 1995; Carsten/Hugh-Jones 1995a, 10; P. Thomas 1996. Others have warned against using the term house-based societies for too wide an array of social forms (Howell 1995).

20 Although this insight has been voiced more often than applied (cf. Vellinga 1999, 99).

21 Van Wijk 1948; Slicher van Bath 1972 [1944], part 2, 71-77 (who traces this practice back to the 13th century AD or earlier).

strategies. Given that a person's identity is partly defined through his or her house, that house can also affect social positions and status. Having a house, for example, that is considered suitable for receiving guests or for carrying out ceremonies and rituals in which the whole local community is involved is frequently regarded as an important source of status. Much energy and capital is sometimes spent on enlarging or decorating one's house in order to be able to take part in social arenas and to engage in profitable social relations with other groups.[23]

Finally, because of the simple fact that the household changes through time, in size, composition, or status the relationship between the household and the house must be in a constant process of change. The temporal element in the relationships between house and inhabitants will be further explored in the following section.

3.1.4 THE TEMPORALITY OF DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

An important structuring factor in the social and symbolic meanings of houses in many societies is time.[24] The ethnographic literature describes examples of changing meanings of houses with time of day (e.g., a space with female connotations during the day but with male at night),[25] with the passing of seasons, or with time as marked by periodic rituals.[26] Many time scales are difficult to grasp archaeologically, but one singled out in the literature as being highly significant for the social and symbolic meanings of houses is 'biographical' time.[27] That is time on the scale of the human life cycle. In light of the foregoing discussion on the symbolic links between houses and social units such as households or descent groups, it is not surprising that this time scale may have an effect on the symbolic meanings as well as the physical appearance of houses.

A useful notion in this respect is that of the developmental cycle of domestic groups. This notion was first developed by a group of British anthropologists around Jack Goody.[28] There are certain regularities in the stages that a household passes through between its formation and final dissolution. These begin with a phase of expansion, the period from the marriage of two people to the end of the phase in which their children are dependent on them.[29] It is followed by a period of dispersion, as grown-up children marry and begin their own household, and a period of replacement, when the children take over the social positions of their parents in the wider community and the parents pass away. Partly, these phases are the result of biological givens, such as the period during which a woman can bear children and a person's life expectancy. Partly too, they are the result of culturally determined factors, such as age of marriage, the occurrence of polygamy, and the average number of children per marital couple. The developmental cycle not only affects household size and composition, but it is a factor in many of the social and economic issues of the household. The developmental cycle, for example, has a direct bearing on the labour potential of a household. This will increase with the number of children, and with their advancing ages, and this in turn will affect the possibilities of a household head to take part in competition for status or social position within the community.[30]

22 See the introduction of chapter 4 for a discussion of material culture and the symbolic construction of social groups.

23 Johnson 1989; Çevik 1995.

24 Rapoport 1990; Bailey 1990; Lane 1994.

25 Bourdieu 1973.

26 Rodman 1985; Århem 1991, 64-65; Dietler/Herbich 1993.

27 Dietler/Herbich 1993, 255-256.

28 Goody 1958.

29 Fortes 1958, 4-5.

30 There is a good deal of literature on this subject that will not be discussed here. Examples are the contributions in Goody 1958; Yanagisako 1979; Netting/Wilk/Arnould 1984.

Carsten and Hugh-Jones argue that parallel to the processual nature of domestic groups, houses need to be approached from a similar processual framework:

Inasmuch as we stress the processual nature of kinship, more radically we would also stress the processual nature of the house. Buildings themselves are not static […]. This is not simply the obvious point that houses must be built and maintained, get modified to fit the needs of their occupants, are extended and rebuilt, and ultimately decay and fall down. It is also to stress that such architectural processes are made to coincide, in various ways, with important events and processes in the lives of their occupants and are thought of in terms of them.[31]

In many societies a structural and dynamic relationship can indeed be distinguished between the domestic cycle of a household and the house it inhabits.[32] Among the Marakwet in Kenya, for example, a young man with plans to marry will build a house for himself.[33] After marriage, a second building is added, thus forming a compound with the original structure. Depending on the economic situation, the man will expand the number of huts and storage facilities as his children grow older or as he takes another wife. When the oldest daughter approaches the age of eight, a second hut is almost compulsory, as he will not be allowed to sleep in the same hut as his daughter. Depending on his place with regard to his siblings, a man may also have to build another house for a widowed parent. The compound thus grows and 'matures' with its owner and the developmental cycle of his household. A lack of children or funds to build more huts, however, may result in a compound that never reaches maturity.

A similar 'life cycle' of houses has been described for the Kapsiki of Cameroon. Van Beek, studying a Kapsiki village, observed that the state of a man's compound reflects the phase of the domestic cycle that his household occupies. It simultaneously affects his social standing.[34] Women in this society have a great deal of freedom in divorcing and changing husbands. A man's social standing rests for an important part on his ability to marry several wives, and to keep them in his household. A household head in his forties or fifties, who has failed to reach the ideal of several wives and many children, inhabits a compound with few huts, or with many abandoned huts. As a result, it will be even harder for him to convince women to marry him. A man's house will therefore be a symbol of his social success or failure, and will at the same time determine his chances to be successful in the social arena.

Both examples above described a situation whereby a house is strongly associated with the life cycle of the head of the household. Most young men in these societies build a house for themselves, and only a minority takes over the house of their parents. There is a link between the limited single-generation period of occupation of houses and their physical characteristics. In situations where houses are built of stone and can be inhabited for multiple generations, this permanence may be an aspect of the social meaning of the building, for example as a symbol for the continuity of a social group, or for the ancestral founder of the house.[35]

Among the Zafimaniry of Madagascar, the house is not so much a symbol for the head of the household as for the marriage of the principal couple.[36] Marriage is perceived as an ongoing process that continues as long as the couple lives, and lasts even after death. The house, whose building and inauguration rituals are inextricably bound up with the wedding rituals, starts off as a flimsy reed and bamboo structure. As the marriage matures and proves successful by producing offspring, the house is gradually modified. Little by little parts of the building are replaced by pieces of hardwood – it 'acquires bones'. The

31 Carsten/Hugh-Jones 1995a, 39.

32 Apart from the examples described here, e.g. Lane 1994; Çevik 1995.

33 Moore 1986, 91-98.

34 Van Beek 1986; idem 1991.

35 Cf. Huijbers in prep. for similar ideas concerning farmhouses in the High Middle Ages.

36 Bloch 1995.

posts are increasingly decorated with relief carvings. Children, even after they have moved out and have begun the processes of house building and marriage themselves will continue to work on the beautification of their parents' house. After the couple dies, one of the sons may take over the house, but in effect the house will still be perceived as belonging to the founding couple, symbolising the success of their marriage. Some of the houses in a community are thus maintained and even further 'hardened' long after the founding couple has died. These become 'holy houses' that are an important focus for the group of descendants of the couple. It is the place where they come together for rituals and to receive blessings from the ancestors.

In addition to numerous examples of the construction of a new house coinciding with a person reaching adulthood or a couple getting married, there are also ethnographic cases where the death of the principal occupant is followed by the abandonment or destruction of the house.[37] One could say that in a society where there is little functional differentiation between architectural structures, it is not necessarily meaningful that life cycle rituals focus on the house, but this would not do justice to the significance of the conceptual link between house and its inhabitants. The examples discussed here indicate that both inhabitants and the house change, and these changes are often made to coincide with each other. This is more than a gratuitous remark that has little value for archaeologists who by definition study houses long after the process of dwelling has ended. It is something that needs to be taken into account when trying to understand the social and symbolic meanings of houses in a society, but also to understand people's place within the wider cultural landscape.

3.1.5 THE CULTURAL BIOGRAPHY OF HOUSES

With the rise of social archaeology in the 1960s and 1970s, domestic architecture has featured in many archaeological studies, based on a variety of theoretical underpinnings, as a key category for the study of social organisation.[38] In most of this work little systematic attention has been paid to temporal aspects, even though its significance was pointed out by several ethno-archaeological studies.[39] Some exceptions should be mentioned. Noteworthy in this respect are Ruth Tringham's work on the Neolithic and Copper Age of southeastern Europe in which she suggests a link between the domestic cycle of households and the life histories of houses, and that of Douglass Bailey, who pointed out that repetitive phases of rebuilding houses on mounded sites in the same region may have provided a means for legitimising habitation and social continuity at the site.[40] Julian Thomas has advocated the introduction of the element of experienced time to the interpretation of material culture and applied this to *Linearbandkeramik* houses in northwestern Europe.[41] Even more recently, Joanna Brück has used the notion of settlement life cycles to explore the social practices behind British Early and Middle Bronze Age settlement remains and in particular deposits within settlements.[42]

In the following chapter on houses and households in the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age of the MDS regions, a similar temporally-sensitive approach will be used. Emphasising the temporal aspects of the social meanings of domestic space implies almost inevitably that less attention is given to the spatial dimension. This is not to deny its importance: space and time are both fundamental and indissoluble

37 E.g. Rivière 1995; Hugh-Jones 1995; Descola 1996, 126-127; Küchler 1993.

38 Hodder 1990; Samson 1990; Kent 1990; Parker Pearson/Richards 1994b; Brück/Goodman 1999b.

39 Moore 1986; Dietler/Herbich 1993, 253; Lane 1994.

40 Tringham 1991; idem 1995; Bailey 1990; idem 1996; Stevanovic 1997.

41 J. Thomas 1996, chapter 5.

42 Brück 1999a; idem 1999c.

aspects of all human practice and should be part of all archaeological enquiry. But while archaeologists have spent a great deal of energy on developing methods to investigate the spatial dimensions of ancient societies, there is still much work to be done on understanding those temporal aspects that are not concerned with chronology but with time as it may have been a meaningful element of material culture in past societies.

A powerful concept in this respect is that of cultural biography. Introduced by Igor Kopytoff, its basic supposition holds that the life cycle of an object is culturally specific.[43] People apply sets of ideas and values when dealing with objects, and have a mental image of the ideal life cycle of an object. Between the moment an object is produced to the moment it is discarded or forgotten it passes through several, culturally specific, phases. In each phase the function, role, status and perception of the object may change, and by being used, possessed or exchanged by specific persons, the object acquires a history. While each individual object will have its own unique biography, patterning will enable the researcher to discern typical biographies. Kopytoff mentions as an example the biographies of huts among the Suku of Zaire. A hut typically begins with housing a conjugal couple or mother with children. In later stages of its life, the hut can go from being a guesthouse to a kitchen, to end up as a chicken coop before its final collapse. Each phase corresponds to a physical state of the hut.[44] Turning a kitchen hut or, worse, a chicken coop, back into a dwelling hut again would constitute a socially unacceptable biographical turn.

Biographies can also be written for prehistoric houses, and can provide insights into the cultural dynamics of house building, habitation and house abandonment. Changes in typical biographies can point to wider social and cultural transformations. Of course, for a truly detailed archaeological biography a Pompeii situation would be required. Wetland sites can under certain conditions also produce house remains with detailed evidence about successive phases of use, reconstruction and collapse. This degree of detail is absent in the sandy landscapes. But this is compensated by the large number of plans of farmhouses that have been excavated to date, making it possible to go beyond the unique and specific and to investigate wider patterns, in other words typical rather than unique biographies.

3.1.6 HOUSE, FARMYARD, FARMSTEAD

Several terms will be used frequently in the pages of this chapter that may give rise to confusion if not properly defined. The term house or farmhouse refers to a building used primarily for habitation by humans, and in the case of byre-houses by humans and animals together. The farmyard is an often ill-defined area surrounding the house, containing secondary structures (granaries, storage structures, wells etc.) and is the place where many of the domestic activities take place. The farmstead consists of both house and yard, but the arable lands are not considered to be part of a farmstead here. It can have a life span that covers multiple house phases. When a house is replaced by another on the same site or within the same farmyard, one can speak of house abandonment even though the farmstead continues to be inhabited. Moreover, the term farmstead refers to the dwelling place in the wider landscape. It has a more abstract dimension, therefore, than house and yard.

[43] Kopytoff 1986.

[44] Kopytoff 1986, 67.

3.2 CONSTRUCTING HOUSE AND HOUSEHOLD

3.2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous section I proposed that we are warranted in viewing house and household as two symbolically intertwined entities. Here I would like to take the argument one step further, and suggest as a working hypothesis that – in the case of the prehistoric house types of the sandy landscapes – there was a temporal relationship between the domestic cycle of a household and the life cycle of its farmhouse. This is an assumption supported to some degree by estimates of the average life span of post-built houses in sandy and moist conditions.

Such estimates have mostly been based on the durability of wooden posts.[45] The main factors affecting the life span are wood species, the diameter of the post and the soil type in which it was placed. For the Middle and Late Bronze Age houses of West-Friesland that were built largely with alder posts, IJzereef and Van Regteren Altena came up with estimates of 16 to 24 years. The use of oak would have increased the potential life span of a house considerably.[46] Calculating the average life span of farmhouses from the total duration of occupation of house sites and the number of ground plans, their estimates pointed to the upper end of the scale, around 25 years. This suggests that the life span of houses depended not only on rotting processes but also on other factors. Therkorn reached a similar conclusion, estimating that a much-repaired house in the Assendelver Polders had been inhabited for about 35 years.[47] The conditions in the western Netherlands cannot be compared easily with those of the MDS region. On the one hand, sandy soil conditions are thought to shorten the life span of wooden posts,[48] but the greater availability of hardwood trees on the other hand would have made it possible to build houses that lasted rather longer than those in peat and clay landscapes. Altogether, it appears reasonable to assume an average life span for prehistoric houses of 20 years or slightly more. Combining this with general demographic averages for the succession of human generations, a correspondence between domestic cycles and house life cycles can be assumed.

Figure 3.1 indicates the main phases in the cultural biography of Bronze Age and Iron Age houses and the hypothesised links with phases of the domestic cycle of households. The first stage in the cultural biography of the house comprises its construction, and includes activities such as choosing a location for the new house, collecting and preparing building materials, and the actual construction work. Three issues will be discussed here in the following order: house construction types and building techniques, the choice of location for new farmhouses, and ritualised aspects of house building.

3.2.2 BUILDING THE HOUSE: AN OVERVIEW OF HOUSE CONSTRUCTION TYPES

Once it was decided to build a new house, there was probably little need to think long about how to build it. Houses were built according to the traditions and principles that were passed from generation to generation. But throughout the centuries building traditions did change considerably. A Middle Bronze Age house differs in construction from a Late Iron Age example, even though both belong to a tradition of post-built byre-houses that lasted into the High Middle Ages.[49] A short diachronic overview

45 Bakels 1978, 79-87; IJzereef/Van Regteren Altena 1991, 74-76; Van den Broeke 1993, 73-74.

46 IJzereef/Van Regteren Altena 1991, 76. They reckon that an oak post of 15 cm diameter would have lasted up to 60 years.

47 Therkorn 1987a, 219; See also Van den Broeke 1993.

48 IJzereef/Van Regteren Altena 1991, 74.

49 For the interpretation of these houses as byre-houses (that is, houses that combined a dwelling section and a section for stabling animals under one roof), see 3.3.1.

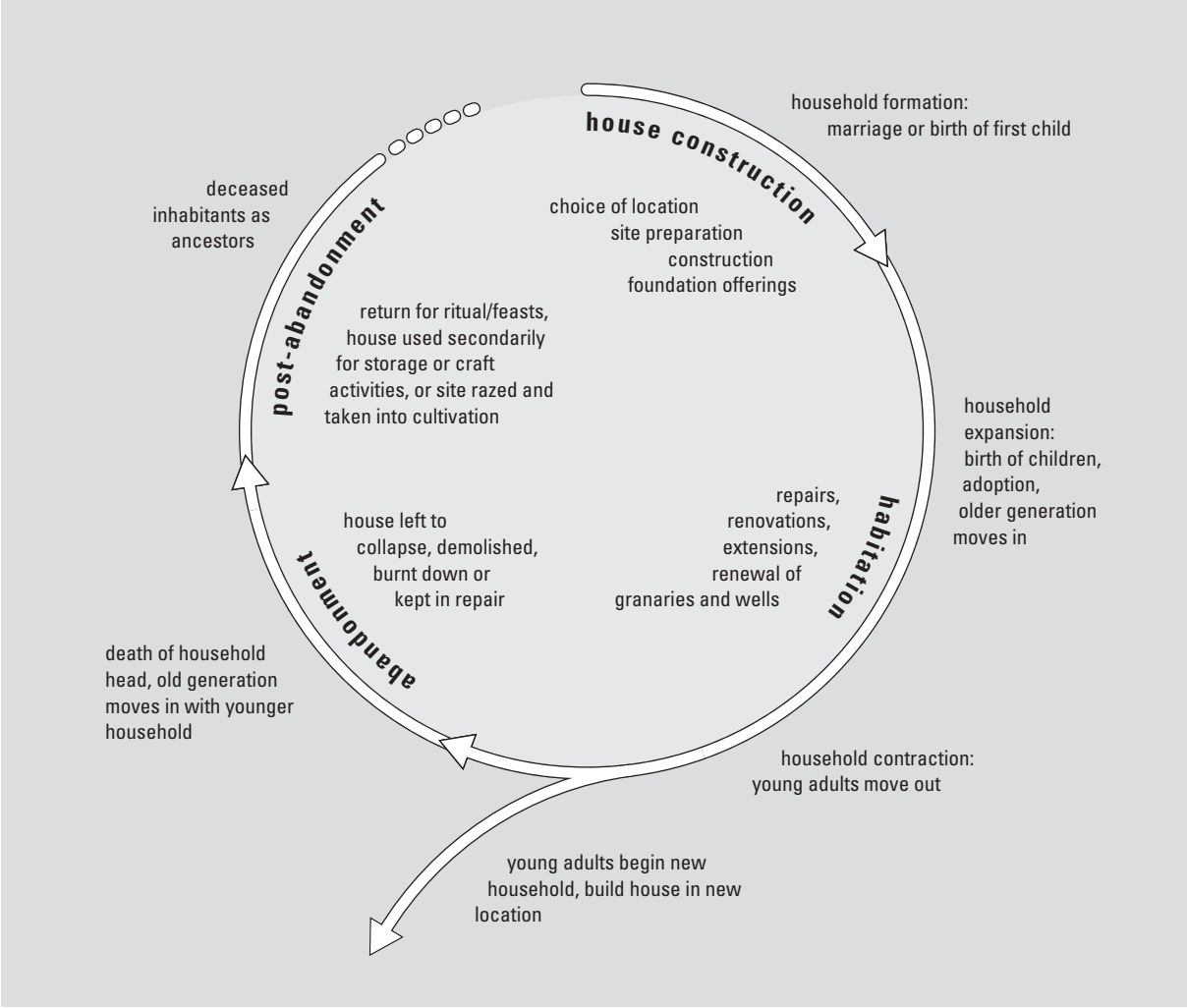

Fig. 3.1 Diagram showing a potential cultural biography of a single-phase farmstead, based on the assumption that the life span of a house corresponded to the life cycle of a household.

will be given, therefore, of house building traditions in the MDS region from the Middle Bronze Age to the beginning of the Roman period. References to specific sites mentioned in the text are mostly omitted; they can be found in the tables.

The Middle Bronze Age

The Middle Bronze Age is the first period which has yielded ground plans of farmhouses in the MDS region, albeit only a small number (fig. 3.2, table 3.1). Not counting small structures whose dwelling function is uncertain, published plans come from eight sites. The construction principle of these houses is fairly uniform (fig. 3.3, 3.4).[50] In plan, a house has the appearance of a three-aisled structure with a broad central aisle flanked by two narrower ones (fig. 3.4). This appearance (they are not true aisles) is

[50] The three farmhouses found at Boxmeer conform to another construction type that is common in the central riverine region: Wijk bij Duurstede (Hessing 1991), Dodewaard, Zijderveld (Hulst 1991; Theunissen 1999, 132-191), Eigenblok (Jongste 2002). At Boxmeer the rafters are supported by trusses and the top of the (sod) walls (Hiddink 2000a, 24-29).

	site name	description	reference
1	Oss	3 farmhouses (*Ussen*), wells, pits, fences; other possible farmyards without excavated farmhouses	Vasbinder/Fokkens 1987; Fokkens 1991a; Schinkel 1998; Jansen/Fokkens 1999
2	Venray	3 farmhouses, secondary structures, pits; 2 houses with interior partition walls; storage pits in interior houses	Stoepker 1997; Krist 2000
3	Boxmeer	3 farmhouses, pits; some storage pits in interior houses	Hiddink 2000a
4	Geldrop	2 farmhouses, secondary structures (possibly MBA), pits; storage pits in interior houses	Wesdorp 1997
5	Nijnsel	1 farmhouse, silos, secondary structures	Beex/Hulst 1968
6	Loon op Zand	1 farmhouse, pits; storage pit in interior house	Roymans/Hiddink 1991a
7	Blerick	1 farmhouse; storage (?) pits in interior house	Theunissen 1999
8	Breda-Moskes	1 farmhouse	Van den Eynde/Berkvens 2001
9	Den Dungen	1 farmhouse (plan unpublished)	Verwers 1991
10	Weelde	1 farmhouse (plan unpublished), pits	Annaert 1998
11	Sittard	1 farmhouse (GrA-15913: 3080 ± 60 BP)	Tol in prep.
12	Dodewaard	2 or more farmhouses, granaries, fences	Hulst 1991; Theunissen 1999
13	Geldermalsen/Meteren	*Eigenblok*: 7 farmhouses at 6 locations, secondary structures, pits, fences; several farmhouses at *Voetakker* and *De Bogen*	Jongste 2002; Meijlink 2001; Meijlink/Kranendonk 2002
14	Zijderveld	1 farmhouse, fences, granaries and secondary structures; 2 (incomplete) farmyards were distinguished	Hulst 1991; Theunissen 1999
	Wijk bij Duurstede	10 to 12 houses, representing 9? farmsteads, 2 secondary structures; pits around 1 house	Hessing 1991

Table 3.1 Sites with excavated plans of Middle Bronze Age farmhouses in the MDS region. Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region.

the result of the regularly spaced series of half trusses that constitute the structural frame of the house.[51] Each rafter is supported at its base and at about one third of the length by upright posts set into the ground. In some cases there are additional posts along the central axis of the house, which may have supported a ridge-pole (from a structural viewpoint there would not have been a need for one), or an attic. The wall of this house type was located outside the line of outer posts (or in some cases just inside them), and would have served primarily to close off the interior space; it did not carry the load of the roof. Evidence for the wall construction is absent, but based on parallels from the central riverine area and the western Netherlands it can be assumed that it consisted either of a wattle frame with daub or of sods. Entrances, when recognisable, are located opposite each other in the long sides of the house; sometimes additional entrances occur in one of the short sides.

Middle Bronze Age houses vary considerably in size. The shortest are around ten metres in length, the longest over thirty. On average, the houses of the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region are close to 20 metres in length. Their width, which without clear evidence for the location of the wall often has to be estimated, lies between five and seven metres.

The Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age

The number of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age plans available for analysis is slightly larger than for the preceding period. Houses have been published from a number of sites (fig. 3.5, table 3.2), but usually in small numbers. At Oss, in a total excavated area of over 50 hectares, only ten plans of farmhouses have come to light. This is undoubtedly related to the dispersed and unstable nature of occupation with-

[51] For the reconstructions of farmhouses I rely heavily on Huijts 1992 and to a lesser extent on Schinkel 1998.

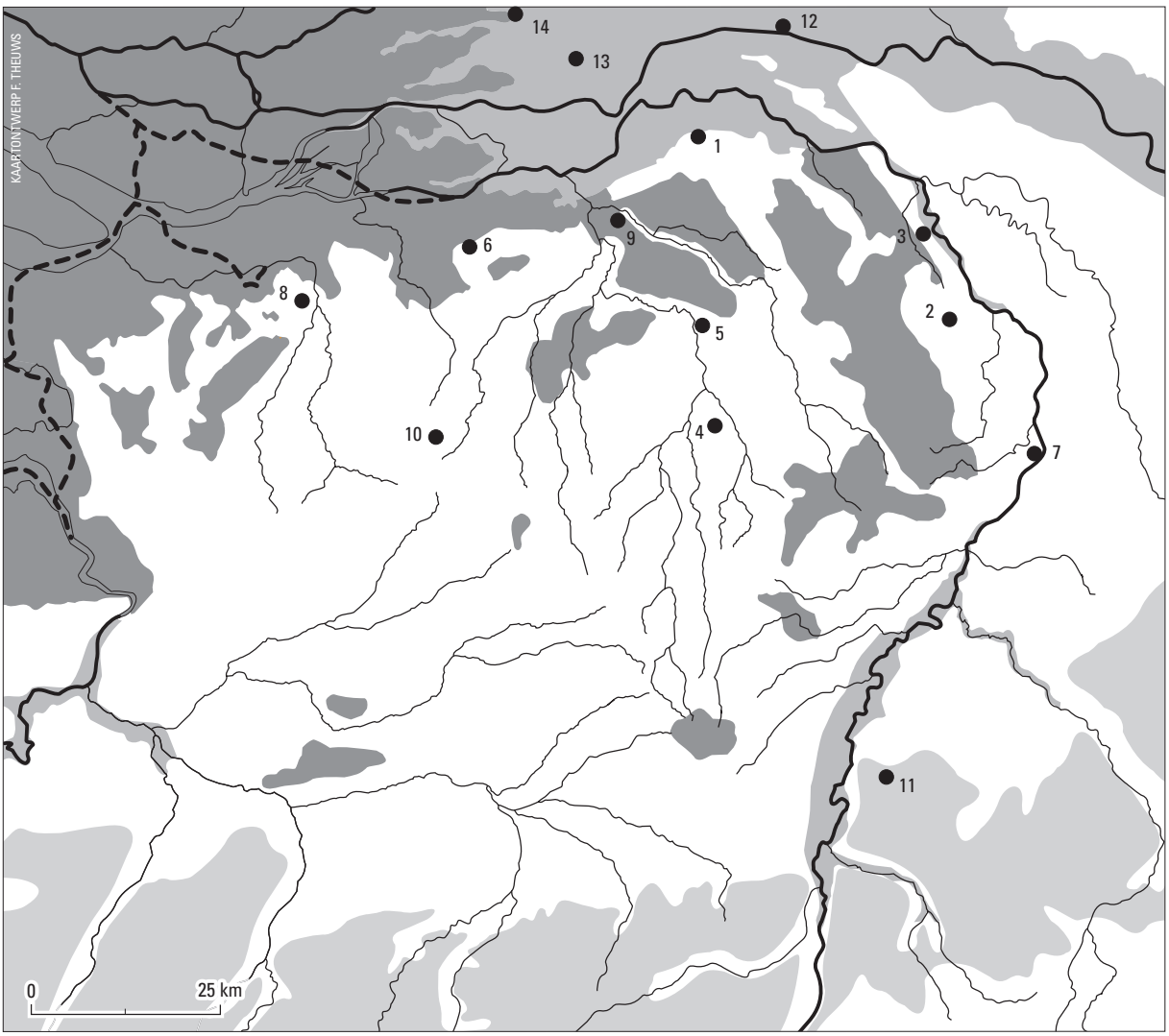

Fig. 3.2 Sites where Middle Bronze Age farmhouses have been excavated. The numbers correspond to those of table 3.1.

in Urnfield period settlement territories (see 3.2.3), and cannot be taken as a direct representation for low population densities. Precisely dating Urnfield period farmhouses is somewhat of a problem. The ceramic finds associated with a ground plan are often indistinct and few in number, while the precision of radiocarbon dating suffers from the 'wiggles' in the calibration curve of this period. Assigning houses to the Urnfield period on the basis of typo-chronological criteria can be done with some confidence, but we are still quite poorly informed about the transitions from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age and from the Early Iron Age to the Middle Iron Age. In other parts of the Netherlands (Drenthe, West-Friesland) Middle Bronze Age house type continued to be used during the Late Bronze Age.[52] This may have been the case in the MDS region as well, but there is at present a lack of data to confirm this. There are very few houses that can be dated with certainty to the Late Bronze Age, but it is clear that new building traditions were introduced during that period.

A set of two entrances located opposite each other in the long sides of the house occur now in every house (fig. 3.6). The way in which the upright posts support the upper structure of the house differs from the Middle Bronze Age technique. Instead of a structural frame of trusses or half-trusses, there is now an

[52] Roymans/Fokkens 1991, 8-9; Huijts 1992, 37-65.

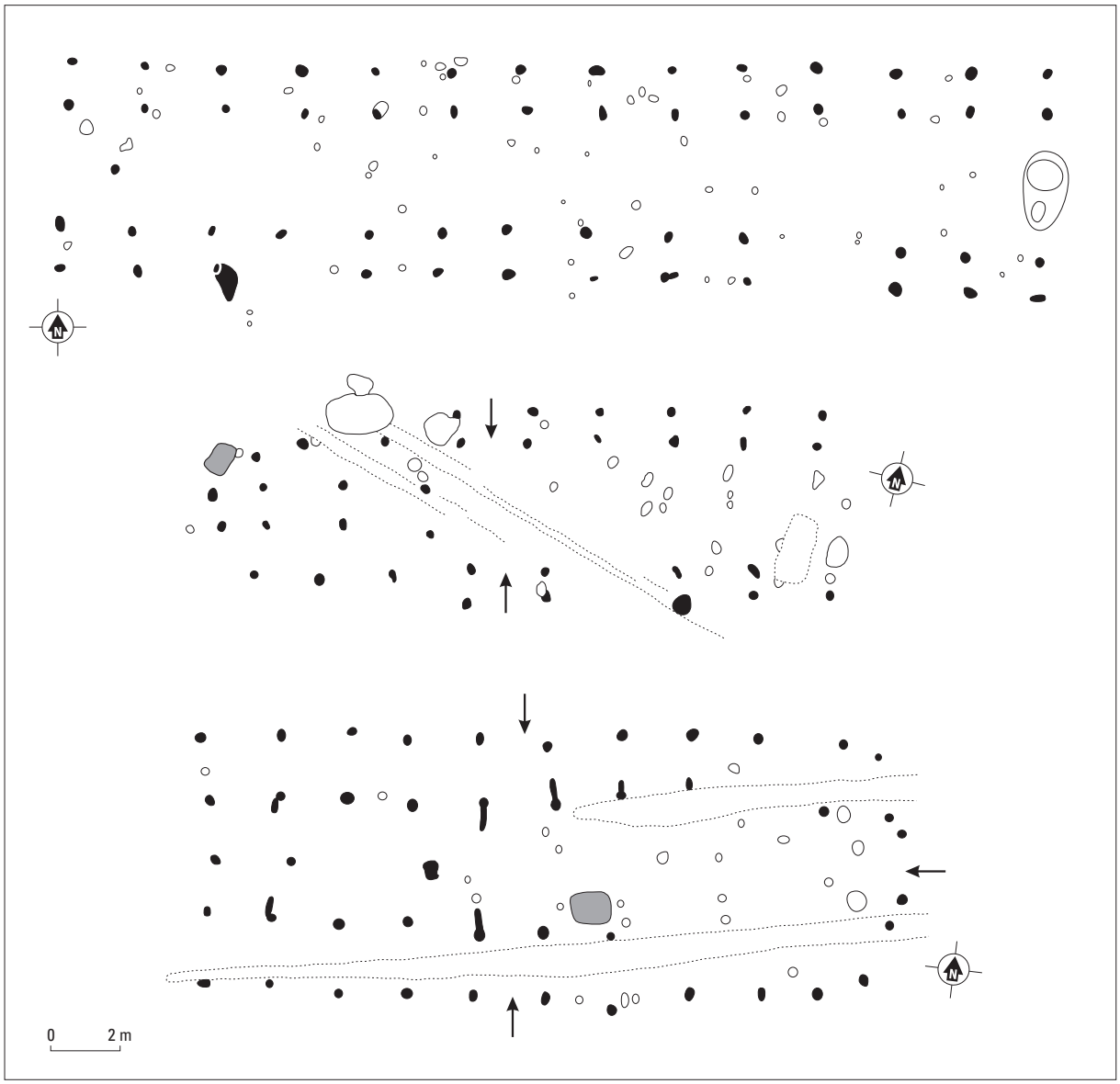

Fig. 3.3 Examples of Middle Bronze Age house plans. Top to bottom: Oss 128, after Fokkens 1991a, fig. 5; Geldrop 1, after Wesdorp 1997, fig. 10; Loon op Zand 1, after Roymans/Hiddink 1991a, fig. 4.

internal, horizontal frame of longitudinal and transversal beams at about two-thirds of the height of the roof (fig. 3.7). This frame is supported by double or triple rows of posts in the interior of the house, and this frame in turn carries the rafters. This means that the rafters are no longer supported individually by uprights. The bases of the rafters are supported either individually or collectively by a row of posts outside the wall. These outer posts are usually set into the ground relatively deeply, indicating that much of the weight of the roof rested on them. The wall is sometimes placed in a shallow wall ditch.[53] Hipped roofs are the main form of closing off the short ends of a house.

[53] Wall-ditch houses are sometimes described as a separate type, the Sint-Oedenrode type (Groenewoudt/Verlinde 1989). Examples have been found not only in the MDS region, but also in East Flanders: Sint-Gillis-Waas (Bourgeois 1993; Bourgeois et al. 1997), and in the eastern Netherlands: e.g. Colmschate (Groenewoudt/Verlinde 1989; Verlinde 1991, 37); Raalte (Terlouw 1996); Wisch (Hulst 1992).

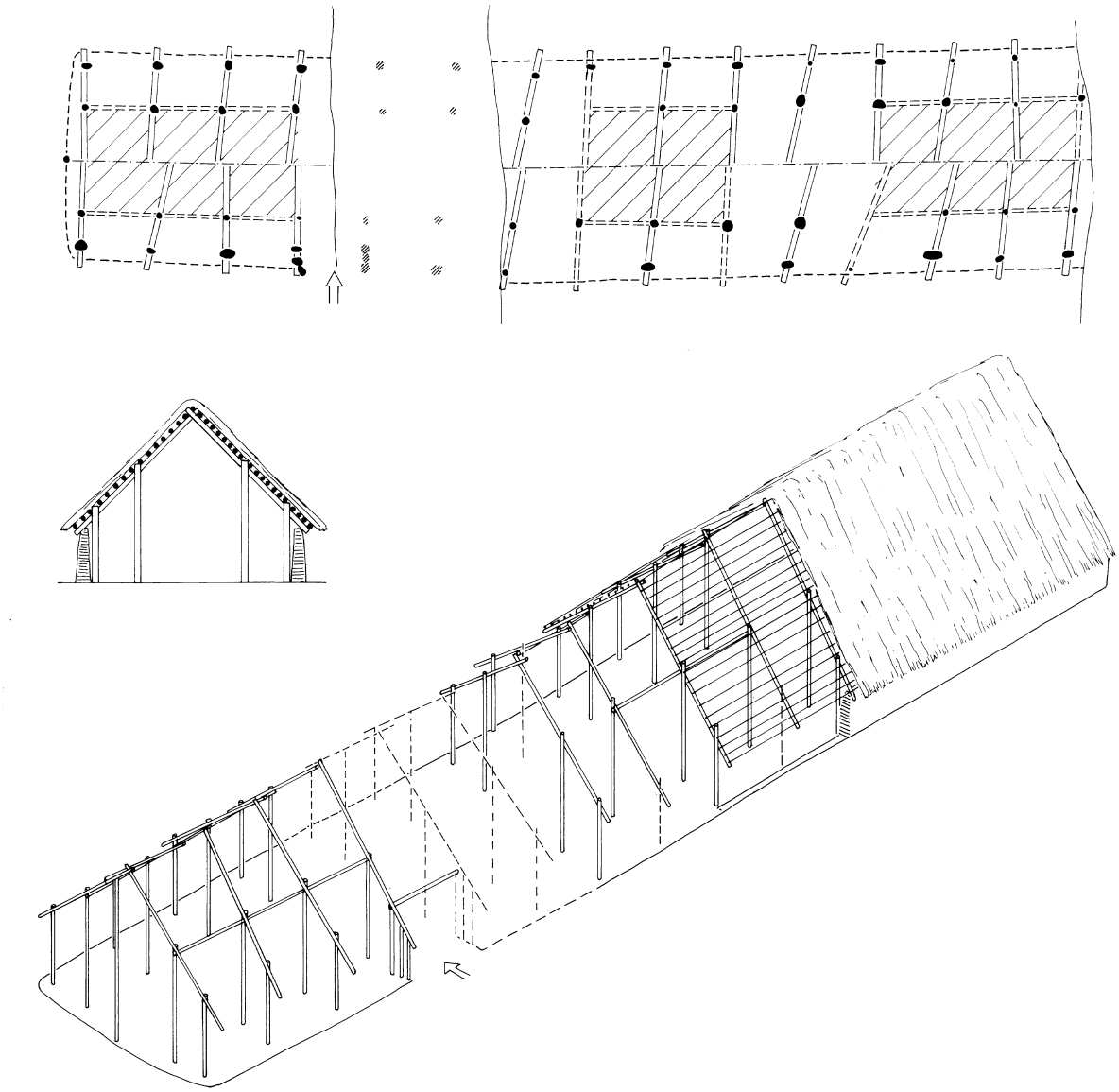

Fig. 3.4 Reconstruction drawing of Middle Bronze Age farmhouse (Oss type 1A). From Schinkel 1998, fig. 22.

In contrast with the Middle Bronze Age there is a greater amount of variation in building traditions. The types described here cover the majority of cases, but there are many variations in matters such as the relative proportion of the weight carried by the internal and external uprights, the function and construction method of the walls. Moreover, there are buildings that appear to have been constructed according to altogether different principles.[54] It is not certain whether all of these were actual dwellings or whether they had a function as barn or stable. They do not show the common layout with two entrances in the long sides, but the presence of a hearth at Echt-Mariahoop, and the presence of storage pits in Venray indicate that a function as dwellings cannot be ruled out. In view of the relatively small number

[54] Echt-Mariahoop: Willems 1983; Venray: Stoepker 1997; Geldrop: Wesdorp 1997; Sittard: Tol personal communication. These constructions have three parallel rows of posts (representing a construction of trusses with central posts supporting a ridge-pole?).

	site name	description	reference
1-2	Oss	9 or 10 farmhouses (*Ussen*: 6 or 7; *Mettegeupel*: 3), pits, secondary structures; other possible farmyards without excavated farmhouses; 1 possible 'double house'	Fokkens 1991a; Schinkel 1998; Jansen/Fokkens 1999
3	Someren	4 to 6 farmhouses, pits, secondary structures; 1 'double house' with numerous pits in interior	Kortlang 1999
4-5	St.-Oedenrode	6 farmhouses (*Everse Akkers*: 4; *Cathelijne*: 2), secondary structures, pits; storage pits in interior houses	Van Bodegraven 1991; unpublished, Roymans pers. comm.
6	Loon op Zand	3 farmhouses, secondary structures, pits; storage pits in interior houses; 1 structure is a 'double house'	Roymans/Hiddink 1991a
7	Breda-Moskes	3 farmhouses, secondary structures, pits	Van den Eynde/Berkvens 2001
8	Den Dungen	3 farmhouses	Verwers 1991
9	Riethoven	2 farmhouses; numerous pits in interior houses	Slofstra 1991a; Gerritsen 1999b
10	Geldrop	2 farmhouses, pits, secondary structures	Wesdorp 1997
11	Mierlo-Hout	1 farmhouse, with annex	Tol 1999
12	Beek en Donk	1 farmhouse	Huijbers 1990
13	Boxmeer	1 farmhouse (LBA?)	Van der Velde 1998
14	Venray	1 farmhouse (EIA or MIA), secondary structures	Stoepker 1997; Krist 2000
15	Gassel	1 farmhouse	Heidinga/Vreenegoor 1990
16	Grubbenvorst	3 (?) farmhouses (EIA or early MIA), secondary structures (plans unpublished)	Bloemers 1971/1972
17	Echt-Mariahoop	1 two-aisled structure (9x4.3m), dwelling function unclear	Willems 1983
18	Sittard	2 farmhouses (1 LBA, 2-aisled (GrN-25442: 2780 ± 40 BP), 1 EIA, 4-aisled)	Tol in prep.
19	Geleen-Janskamperveld	2 two-aisled structures (8x4m, 13x4m), dwelling function unclear	Louwe Kooijmans et al. 1992
20	St. Gillis-Waas	2 or more farmhouses, other possible dwelling structures, pits, wells	Bourgeois/Van Strydonck 1995; Bourgeois et al. 1997; Bourgeois/Hageman 1998
21	Zijderveld	1 farmhouse, with hearth and partition wall	Hulst 1991
	Wijk bij Duurstede	4 farmhouses	Hessing 1991

Table 3.2 Sites with excavated plans of Urnfield period farmhouses in the MDS region. Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region.

of houses excavated, and the restricted number of sites where houses of the Urnfield period have come to light to date, it makes sense to assume that new house types will be recognised and that buildings that appear unusual at present will be better understood in the future.

Another difference from Middle Bronze Age house types is the lower average house length. Houses over twenty metres are rare (and these all belong to a category of 'double houses' that will be discussed further in section 3.3.3). The average length is around fourteen metres, with the majority between nine and seventeen metres. The average width of the houses is probably slightly larger than before, about six to seven metres.

The Middle Iron Age and the earlier Late Iron Age

The predominant house type of the Middle Iron Age and early Late Iron Age, the so-called Haps type, is well known from the archaeological record of the MDS region (fig. 3.8, table 3.3). At Haps 23 houses of this type were excavated, at Oss (where it is called type 4) around 40, and at Someren over 20. At other sites the number is lower. The Haps type is characterised by a single row of interior posts along the central axis and prominent entrances in the long sides. In comparison to the houses of the Urnfield period a different method is used for supporting the roof-bearing frame of longitudinal and transversal beams. Instead of two or three rows of uprights under this frame, there is now a single row along the central axis of the building (fig. 3.9). In section, a central post forms the upright of a T-construction

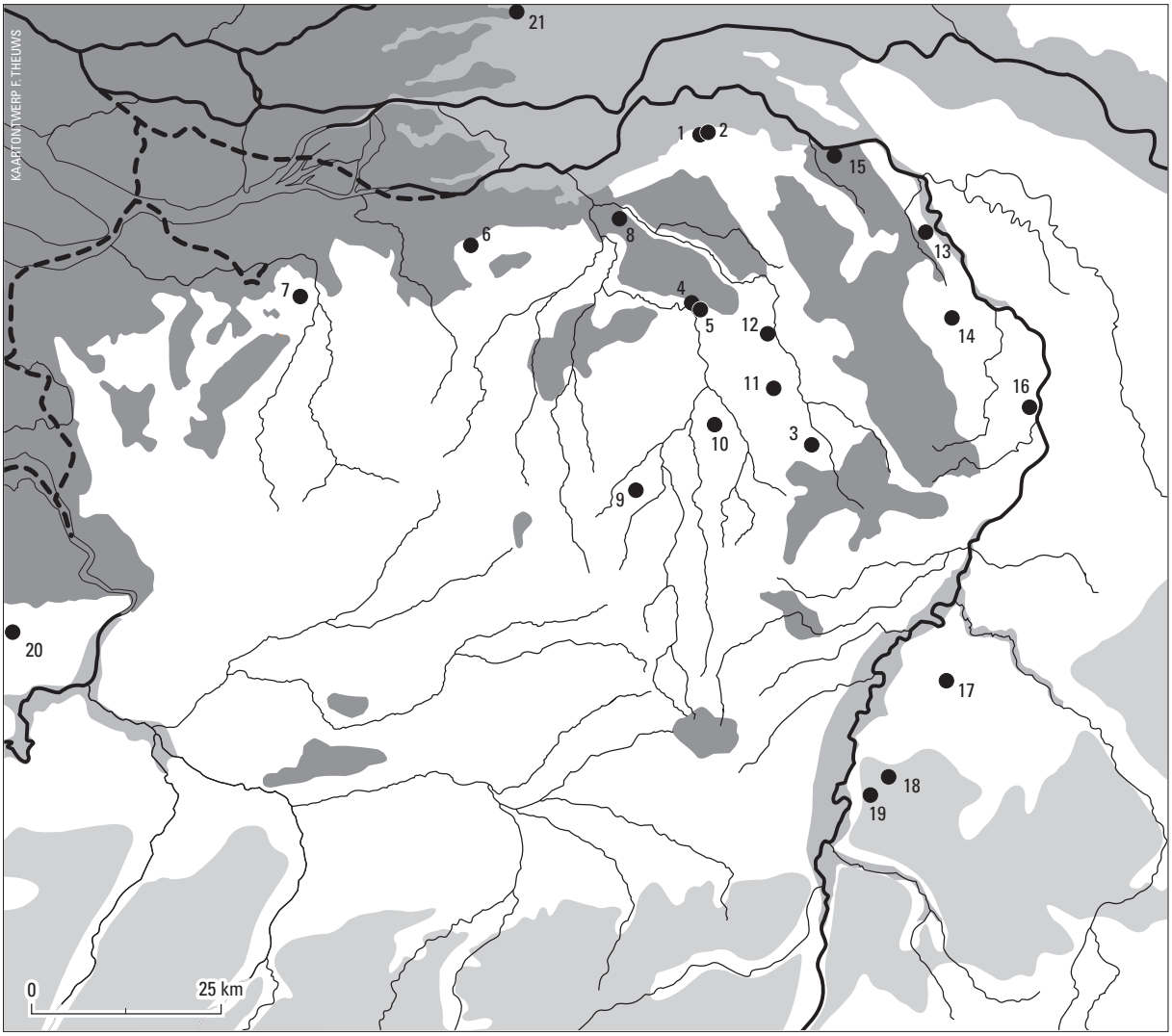

Fig. 3.5 Sites where Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age farmhouses have been excavated. The numbers correspond to those of table 3.2.

(fig. 3.10). As with earlier houses the ridge beam was not an important element of the structural frame.[55] The way in which the bases of the rafters were supported, with a row of external posts, remains the same. As before, the wall was placed somewhat inside the row of external posts and did not significantly contribute to the support of the roof. Hipped roofs close off the short ends of houses.

Average house lengths and widths remain largely the same as in the Urnfield period, a possible difference being that there are few houses shorter than twelve and longer than twenty metres. Constructional variations are present within the Haps type, but they are smaller than in the preceding Urnfield period. There is some variation in the position of the wall posts in relation to the exterior posts. At Oss (the only site where this could be established) this may represent a chronological difference. In earlier Haps-type houses wall posts and external posts are paired at an oblique angle to the axis of the

[55] In this I follow the reconstruction by Huijts (1992). It differs from earlier reconstructions of Haps-type houses such as those by Verwers (1972) and Reichmann (1981), who assume an important function of a ridge-pole supported by the central row of posts.

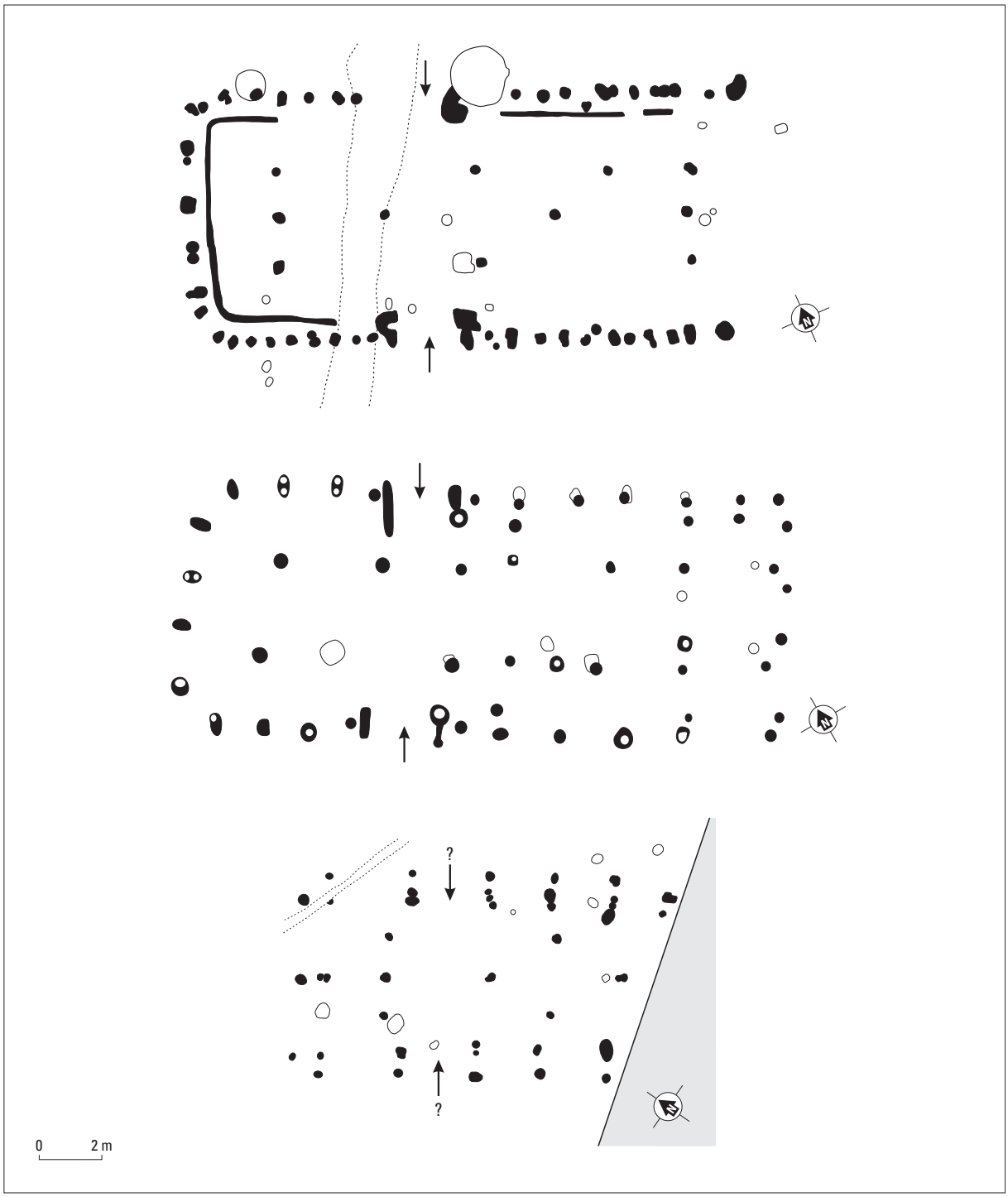

Fig. 3.6 Examples of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age house plans. Top to bottom: Oss 112, after Schinkel 1998, fig. 32; Wijk bij Duurstede, after Hessing 1991, fig. 7c; Beek en Donk, after Huijbers 1990, fig. 13.

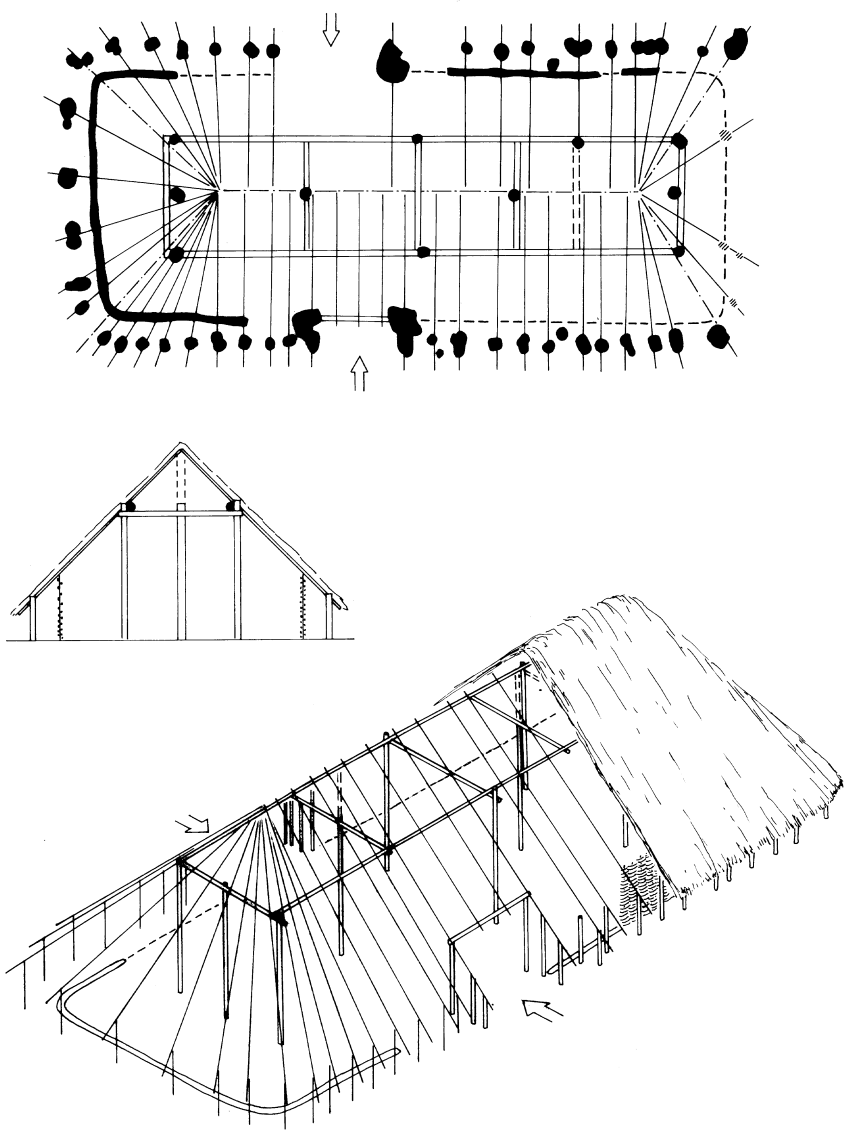

Fig. 3.7 Reconstruction drawing of Early Iron Age farmhouse (Oss type 2B). From Schinkel 1998, fig. 32.

house, creating a zigzag pattern, whereas the later variation has the two posts paired perpendicular to the axis of the house.

The opposition between two-aisled building styles of the southern Netherlands and three-aisled house types of the northern Netherlands and northern Germany has been cited as an indication of the cultural differences between those regions.[56] The evidence from the MDS region does not support this contrast. That region demonstrates not only a predominance of three-aisled buildings in the Urnfield period, but also strong constructional similarities between the Urnfield period houses and Haps-type houses, both in the support of the roof and in the positioning of the entrances. These similarities suggest a gradual development rather than an abrupt change in the MDS region, and also that the differences from the northern Netherlands are smaller than presumed. However, the details of the transition from

[56] Trier 1969.

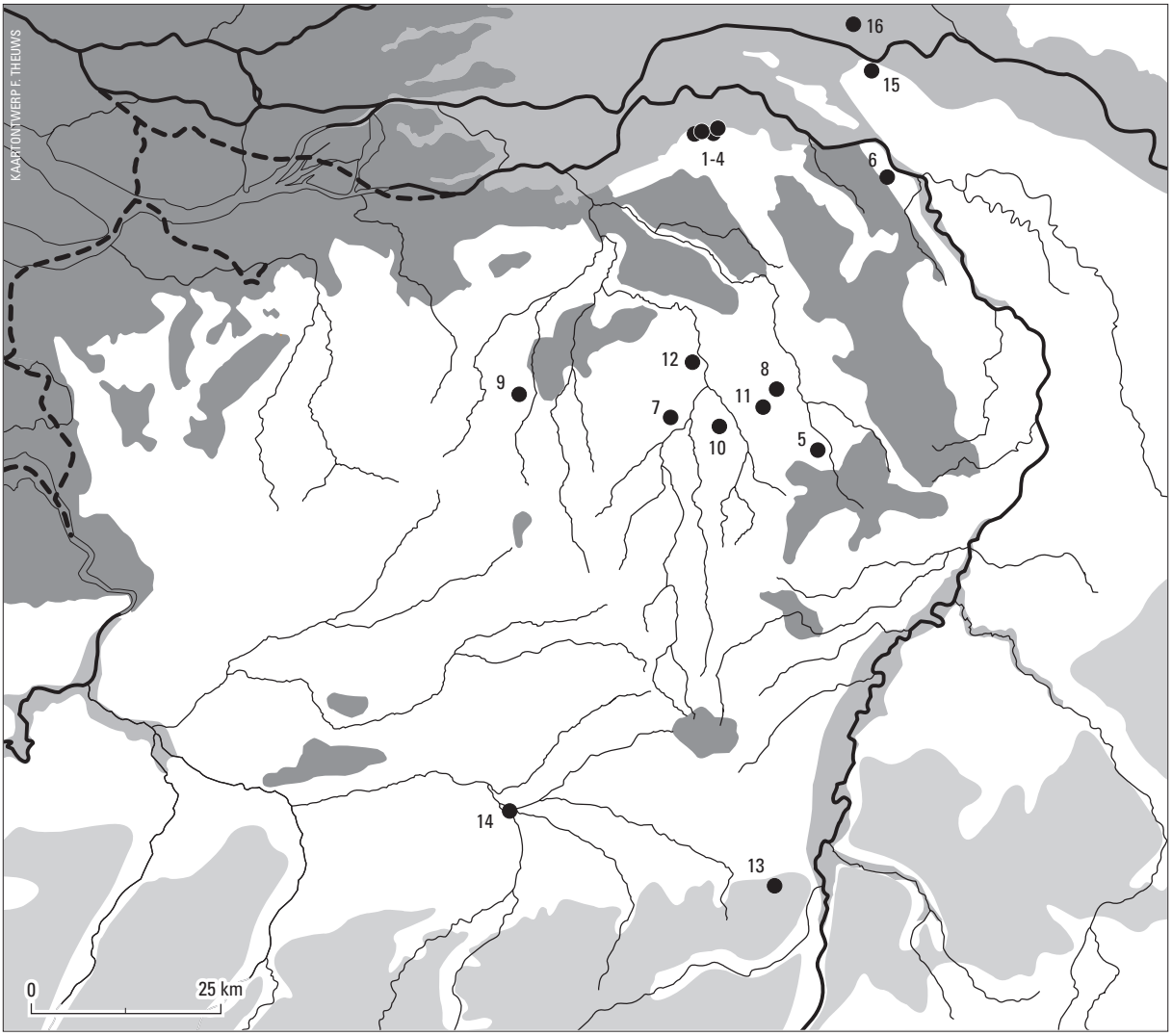

Fig. 3.8 Sites where Haps-type farmhouses (and early examples of Oss-Ussen type houses) have been excavated. The numbers correspond to those of table 3.3.

the Urnfield period types to Haps-type houses are poorly understood, as there are no plans of houses that can be dated with certainty to the 5th century BC.[57] Intuitively it seems easier to assume that Haps-type houses were introduced at the beginning of the Middle Iron Age or even slightly earlier than to suppose that they did not appear until the 4th century BC. There is similar uncertainty with regard to the end of use of the Haps type. Excavations at Oss-Almstein exposed a small cluster of farmsteads of the Late Iron Age that consisted predominantly of Haps-type houses.[58] This settlement appears to have been inhabited until after 150 BC,[59] indicating that the Haps type remained in use at least until the later part of the 2nd century BC. Conclusive evidence for 1st century AD examples is absent, but it is possible that Haps-type houses were still built after new variants had appeared towards the end of the Late Iron Age.

[57] personal communication P. van den Broeke.

[58] Van der Beek 1996.

[59] Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 75-79. The most recent house in this cluster is dated to Oss phase K or L, 150-1BC.

	site name	description	reference
1-4	Oss	48 or 49 farmhouses (*Ussen*: 33 Haps type farmhouses (23 MIA and MIA/LIA, 10 LIA), 3 Oss-Ussen type (MIA or MIA/LIA); *Mettegeupel*: 3 or 4 Haps type (MIA/LIA); *Almstein*: 6 Haps type, 2 other (early LIA); *Schalkskamp*: 1 Oss-Ussen type (early LIA)); secondary structures, wells, pits, fences	Schinkel 1998; Van der Beek 1996; Jansen 1997; Jansen/Fokkens 1999
5	Someren	24 farmhouses (Haps type, MIA/LIA); secondary structures, pits	Kortlang 1999
6	Haps	23 farmhouses (Haps type, MIA/LIA), secondary structures, pits	Verwers 1972
7	Meerhoven	3+ farmhouses (Haps type)	Arts pers. comm
8	Mierlo-Hout	2 farmhouses (Haps type, MIA/LIA)	Tol 1999
9	Hilvarenbeek	2 farmhouses (1 Haps type, 1 Oss-Ussen type?)	Verwers 1975
10	Geldrop	1 farmhouse (Haps type, MIA/LIA)	Wesdorp 1997
11	Mierlo-de Loo	1 farmhouse (Haps type, MIA/LIA)	Berkers-Romanesco et al. 1995
12	Son en Breugel	1 farmhouse (Haps type); secondary structures, pits	Van den Broeke 1980
13	Rosmeer	1 farmhouse	De Boe/Van Impe 1979
14	Donk	settlement traces with possible dwelling structures, pits	Van Impe 1991
15	Nijmegen-Kops Plateau	Haps type houses (plans unpublished)	Fontijn pers. comm.; Fontijn/Cuijpers 1999
16	Nijmegen-Oosterhout	1 farmhouse	Van den Broeke 2002a.

Table 3.3 Sites in the MDS region with farmhouses of the Middle Iron Age and the earlier part of the Late Iron Age (Haps type, early examples of Oss-Ussen type). Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region.

The later Late Iron Age and the transition to the Roman period

During the Late Iron Age several new variants of the bipartite byre-house were introduced (table 3.4). It is not uncommon for examples of more than one type to occur at one site. Although dating evidence is not precise enough to demonstrate absolute contemporaneity between houses, it cannot be ruled out that during the Late Iron Age houses of different types occurred together in a single settlement.

One type with a fairly wide distribution in the southern Netherlands and in Belgium is the so-called 'Oss-Ussen' type, or type 5A as it is called at Oss itself (fig. 3.11). This is once again a structure with a single row of interior uprights along the central axis (fig. 3.12). These posts form the vertical part of a T-construction (fig. 3.13). A difference from the Haps type is that the wall posts and the external posts carrying the base of the roof are placed in close pairs. This means that the rafters rest partly on the wall. A hipped roof usually closes off the short ends of the house. Entrances are less pronounced than in the Haps type, but when they are recognisable they conform to the tradition that started as far back as the Middle Bronze Age of two entrances opposite each other in the long sides that divide the house into two parts. Oss-Ussen type houses were still in use at the very beginning of the Roman period, but probably did not continue much longer.[60]

Another construction, usually referred to as the 'Alphen-Ekeren' type, has its roots in the Late Iron Age and became the dominant farmhouse of the Roman period (fig. 3.14).[61] The central posts here are much heavier than in all earlier types and are deeply founded. Saddle roofs are predominant, as indicated by central posts incorporated in the short walls (fig. 3.15). The wall now became an essential structural element supporting the roof. The wall probably no longer consisted solely of wattle-and-daub or

[60] The two most recent examples at Oss have been dated to the 1st century AD (Schinkel 1998, 250-251, houses 24 and 53).

[61] Slofstra 1991b, 137-143. The earliest dated examples come from Oss and date to the second half of the Late Iron Age (Schinkel 1998, 250-251, houses 56 and 81).

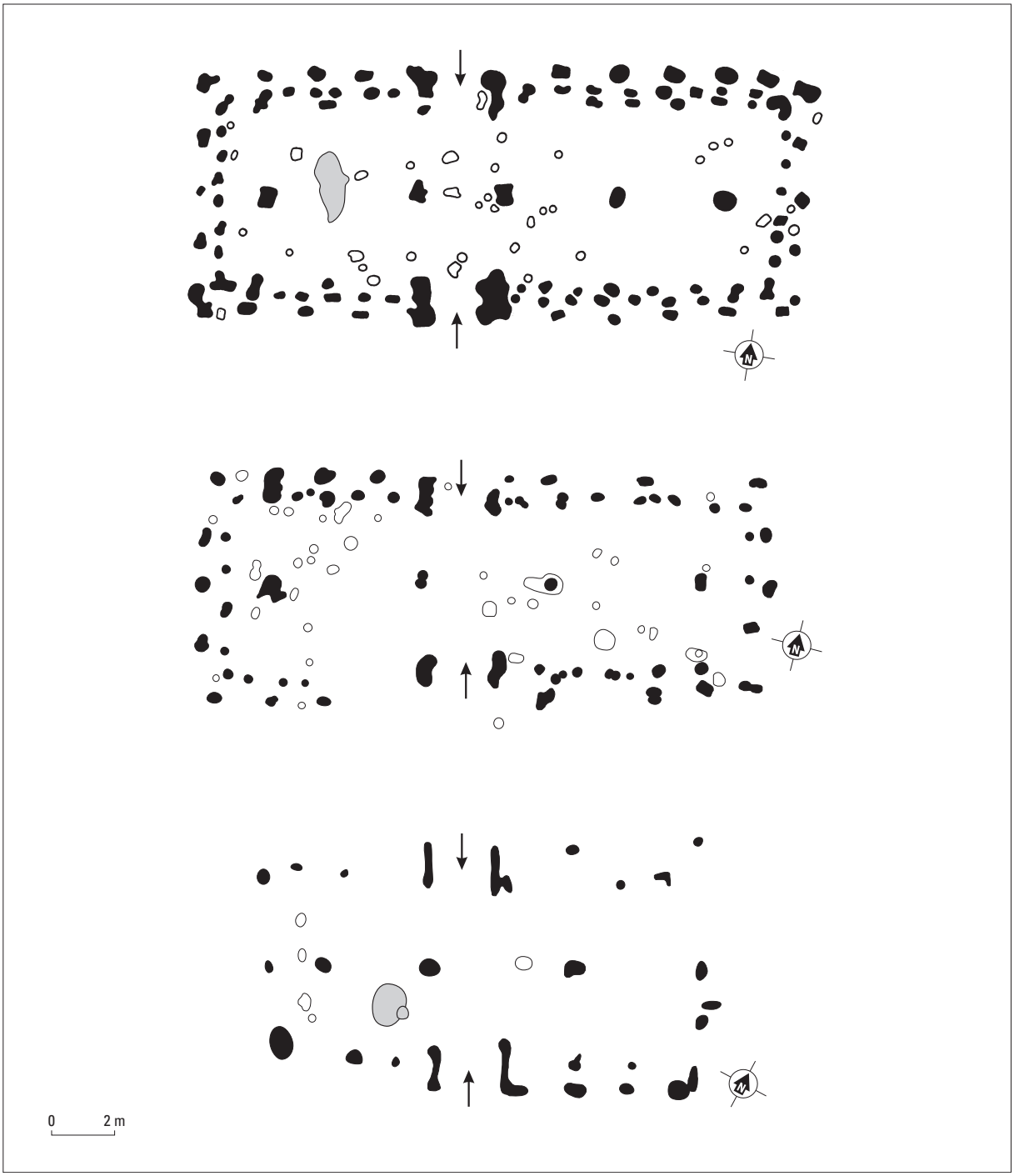

Fig. 3.9 Examples of Haps-type house plans. Top to bottom: Haps T, after Verwers 1972, fig. 48; Haps C, after Verwers 1972, fig. 35; Geldrop 5, after Wesdorp 1997, fig. 22.

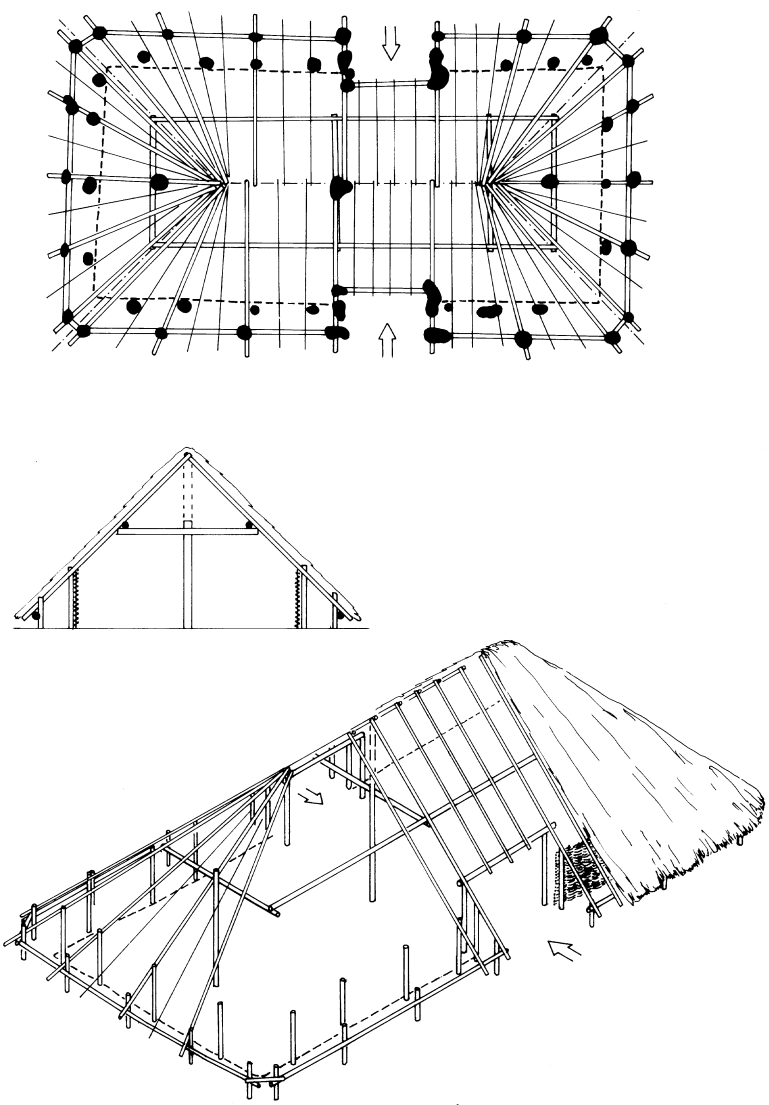

Fig. 3.10 Reconstruction drawing of Haps-type farmhouse (Oss type 4A). From Schinkel 1998, fig. 68.

sods but included posts standing on horizontal planks set in a shallow ditch. When external posts are present as well, they tend to be shallow and probably did not carry much of the weight of the roof. Even though typical examples of Alphen-Ekeren type houses clearly differ from Oss-Ussen types, the distinction is not always as obvious. Some examples combine fairly heavy central posts of the Alphen-Ekeren type with the characteristic paired wall posts and external posts of the Oss-Ussen type.[62] This variation notwithstanding, all Alphen-Ekeren houses were built in a much sturdier fashion than prehistoric house types, and there can be little doubt that the builders had a considerably longer life span in mind for their farmhouses than their predecessors. The use of oak, at least for the central posts, would have contributed further to the durability of the house.[63] I will discuss the implications for the cultural biography of this house type below in section 3.5.

[62] Examples have been found recently at Lieshout-Nieuwenhof (Verwers 1998, 57, fig. 16), Lieshout-Beekseweg (Hiddink 2000b, fig.7, house 61), and Goirle (Hendriks/Van Nuenen 1989a, house 5).

	site name	description	reference
1-4	Oss	58 or 59 farmhouses (*Ussen*: 10 Haps type (LIA), 31 Oss-Ussen type (LIA), 9 Alphen-Ekeren type or other (LIA or LIA/RP); *Schalkskamp*: 2 Alphen-Ekeren type (LIA); *Mettegeupel*: 2 or 3 Oss-Ussen type or other (LIA); *Horzak*: 4 Oss-Ussen type (LIA)); secondary structures, pits, wells, fences, ditches	Schinkel 1998; Jansen/Fokkens 1999; Wesselingh 2000
5-7	Weert	20+ farmhouses; (Raak: ca. 12 Alphen-Ekeren type, LIA/ERP; *Kampershoek*: 1 3-aisled double house, 1 Alphen-Ekeren type, LIA/ERP; *Laarderweg*: 7 Alphen-Ekeren type (LIA/ERP)); secondary structures, pits, wells, ditches	Tol 1995; idem 1996b, and 1998b
8	Moergestel	14 farmhouses (mostly Oss-Ussen type)	Hendriks/Nuenen 1989b; Verwers 1998
9	Ekeren	12 farmhouses (1 plan published, 4-aisled), secondary structures, pits, ditches	Verbeek/Maes/Vanwesenbeeck 2001
10	Neerharen-Rekem	11 farmhouses (10 Alphen-Ekeren type), secondary structures, ditches	De Boe 1985
11	Wijnegem	4 farmhouses (Oss-Ussen type, LIA/ERP)	Cuyt 1991
12	Beegden	4 farmhouses (Oss-Ussen type, LIA/ERP)	Roymans 1988
13	Lieshout-Nieuwenhof	4 farmhouses (Oss-Ussen variant, (LIA)/ERP)	Verwers 1998
14	Lieshout-Beekseweg	2 or 3 farmhouses (Oss-Ussen variant, ERP)	Hiddink 2000b
15	Breda-Emerakker	1 farmhouse (Oss-Ussen type), 1 3-aisled farmhouse (undated)	Van Hoof/Digby/Van den Eynde 1997
16	Den Dungen	1 farmhouse (Oss-Ussen type), 'double house'	Verwers/Van den Broeke 1985; Verwers 1991
17	Goirle-Groote Akkers	1 farmhouse (Oss-Ussen type)	Hendriks/Nuenen 1989a
18	Boxmeer	1 farmhouse (Oss-Ussen type)	Van der Velde 1998
19	Beers	1 farmhouse (Alphen-Ekeren type, LIA), secondary structures	Verwers 1991b; idem 1998
	Amersfoort	1 farmhouse (Oss-Ussen type), with hearth and annex	Snieder 1996

Table 3.4 Sites with farmhouses (Oss-Ussen type, Alphen-Ekeren type) of the later Late Iron Age (including the transition to the Roman period). Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region proper.

In several recent excavations Late Iron Age farmhouses have come to light that have two and sometimes three rows of interior uprights, resembling house types of the Urnfield period.[64] To date not enough well-preserved examples are known to reconstruct the roof and wall constructions, nor to establish the distribution of this house type.

The houses of the Late Iron Age show a considerable variation in length. The average lies between 15 and 20 metres. Houses with a length around ten metres occur, and there are a few examples of houses dating to the early 1st century AD that are close to 30 metres and over. The trend towards longer houses continued into the Roman period, where for example at Oss a single-phase farmhouse of 42 metres was excavated.[65] These longest houses appear to be more common in the riverine area and at Oss than in the heart of the sandy plateau of the MDS region.

[63] Wooden stumps at the base of postholes from Late Iron Age and Roman period house at Oss indicate that thick oak posts were used: Schinkel 1998, 125, table 14; Wesselingh 2000, e.g. 75, 77, 82, 92. The width of the posts ranges from 20 cm to 50 by 30 cm.

[64] Examples (fig. 3.26 bottom, 3.29) have been found at Weert-Kampershoek (Tol 1996b, house 14/15), Weert-Klein Leuken (Tol 1998b), Venlo (unpublished, Tol 1996b, 35) and Ekeren (Verbeek/Maes/Vanwesenbeeck 2001). A similar plan, dated to the Late Iron Age, was found at Zeist in the central Netherlands (Van Dockum/Van Rooijen 1996).

[65] Wesselingh 2000, 74 (house 98). House 108 measures 33.5 metres and dates to the Late Iron Age or pre-Flavian Roman period.

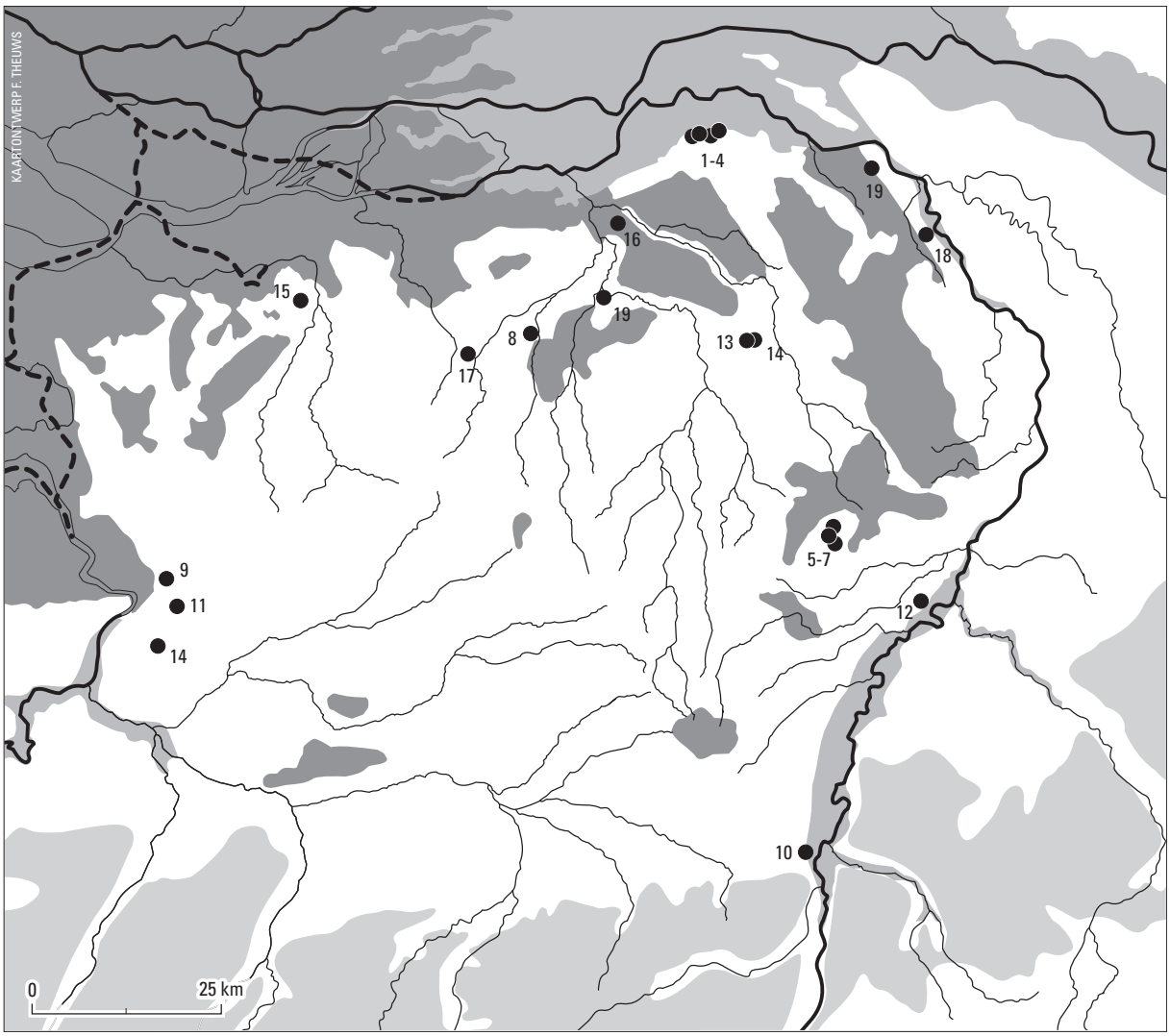

Fig. 3.11 Sites where Oss-Ussen type farmhouses and early examples of Alphen-Ekeren type houses have been excavated. The numbers correspond to those of table 3.4.

The sequence of house types from the Middle Bronze Age to the Roman period is one of gradual change but especially of continuity in building traditions. Throughout this period farmhouses are timber-built, rectangular structures. The great predominance of paired entrances in the long sides that divide the interior space into two main segments suggests that there was also continuity in the use of space inside the houses. The evidence for the use of space will be studied in detail in a later section (3.3.1).

Another aspect of the building tradition that remained unchanged throughout the long byre-house period is that farmhouses were built as complete structures. Of course, houses were sometimes modified at some stage in their life cycle (see 3.3.3), and secondary structures were replaced or added in the surrounding farmyard. But from its beginning a house always contained a living section and a byre section. This is a fundamental difference from architectural traditions around the world where a farmstead may begin as a single small hut to which other buildings are gradually added according to the changing needs of the inhabitants. It means that the project of the initial construction of the house was done over the course of weeks or months rather than years, and it must therefore have been a concentrated effort, presumably involving more people than the future inhabitants alone.

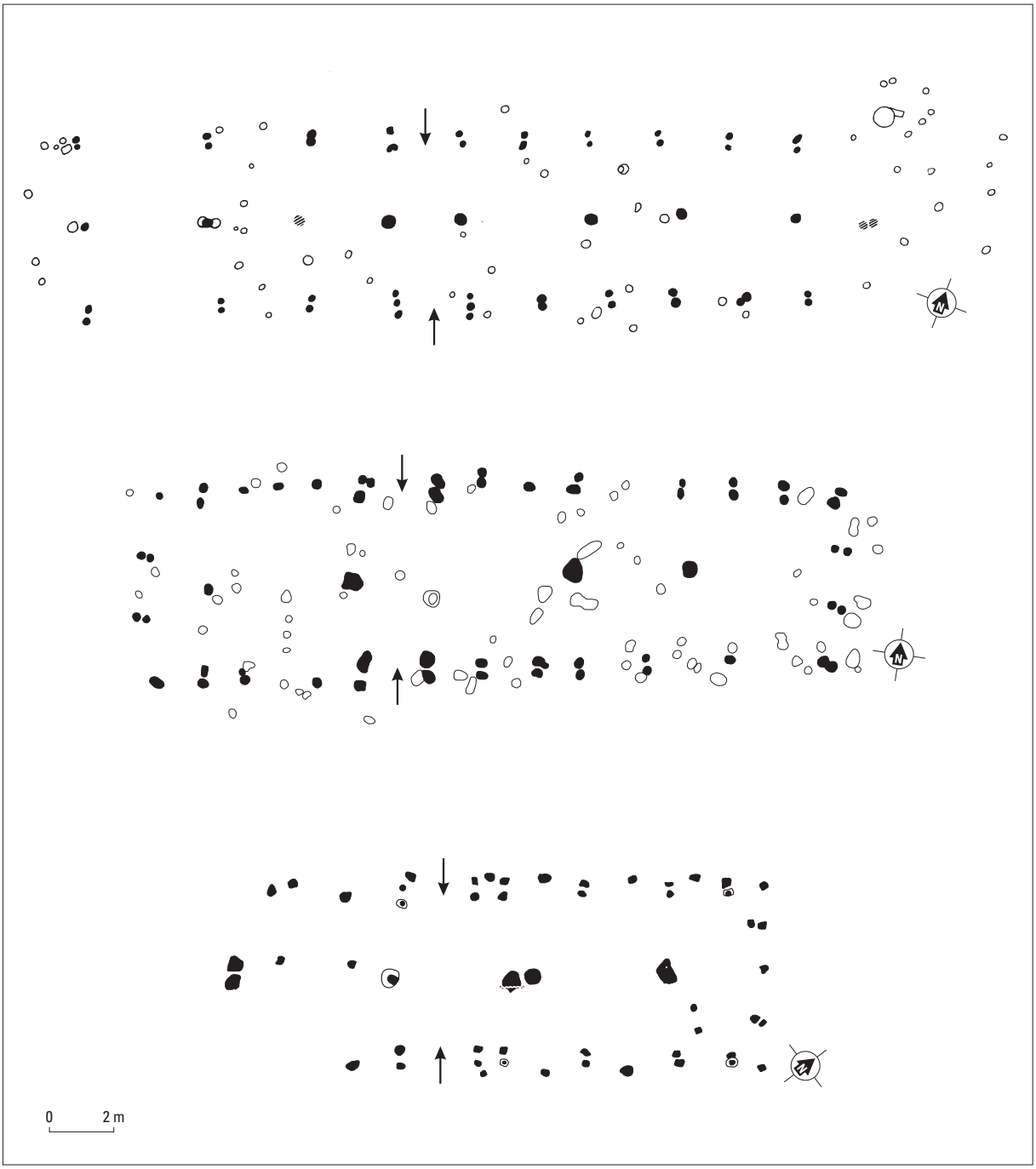

Fig. 3.12 Examples of Oss-Ussen type house plans. Top to bottom: Oss 18, after Schinkel 1998, fig. 229; Oss 103, after Schinkel 1998, fig. 252; Wijnegem VIII, after Cuyt 1991, fig. 2.

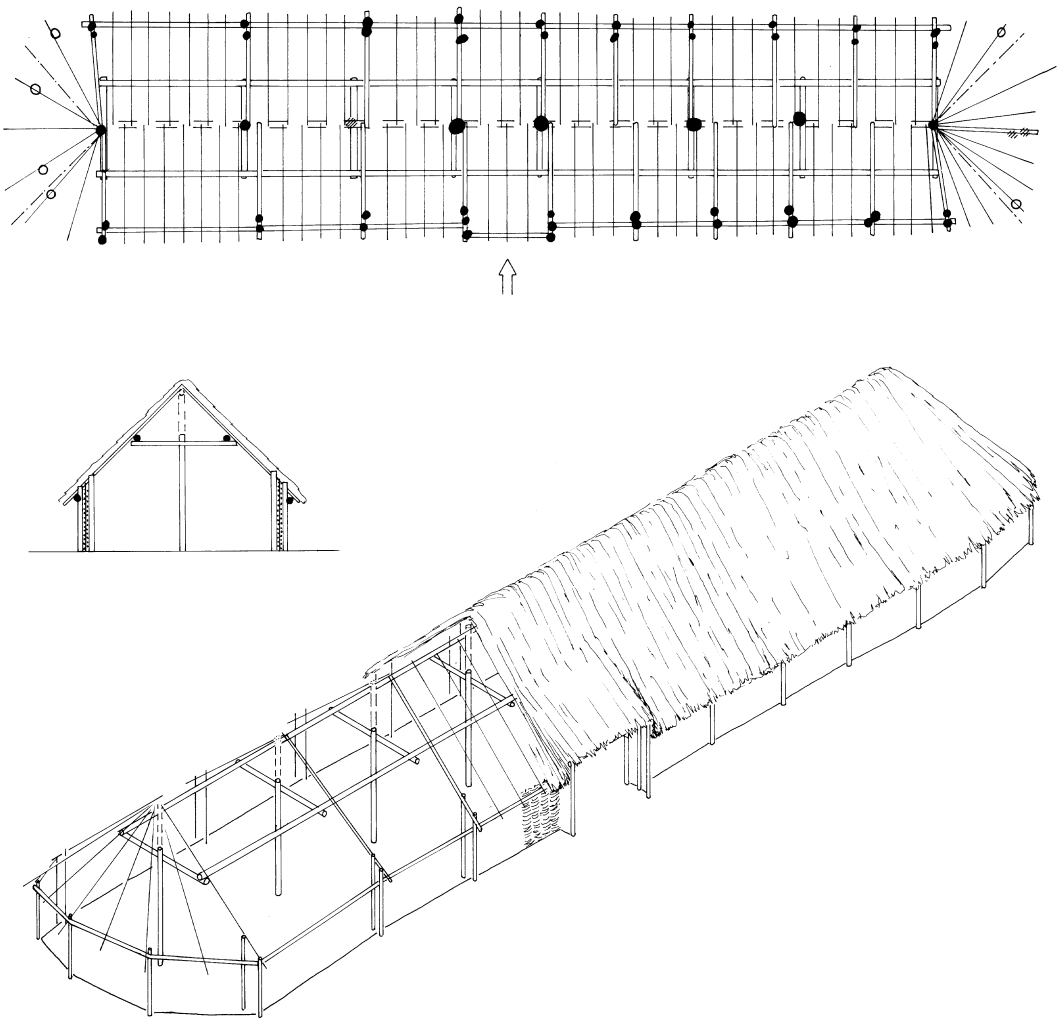

Fig. 3.13 Reconstruction drawing of Oss-Ussen type farmhouse (Oss type 5A). From Schinkel 1998, fig. 109.

The assumption can be made that households, generally speaking, constructed a farmhouse for themselves at the beginning of their domestic cycle rather than towards the end of it. House construction and the formation of a household may have been intertwined as in the case of the Zafimaniry described in the introduction, where wedding ceremonies include the construction and initiation of a house, but the temporal relationship need not have been quite so strict. It is an interesting thought, however, that young households apparently moved into a house with a full-scale byre. Does this indicate that a newly-wed couple already possessed a herd of cattle, perhaps given to them as part of marriage payments?

3.2.3 SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE CHOICE OF FARMSTEAD LOCATION

An important decision that had to be made prior to the building project was the location of the new farmhouse. While anthropologists are familiar with virilocal, uxorilocal or other postmarital residence practices following a wedding, archaeologists have tended to focus on the ecological and economic factors affecting locational choices. There is a well-established tradition of locational analyses of hunting

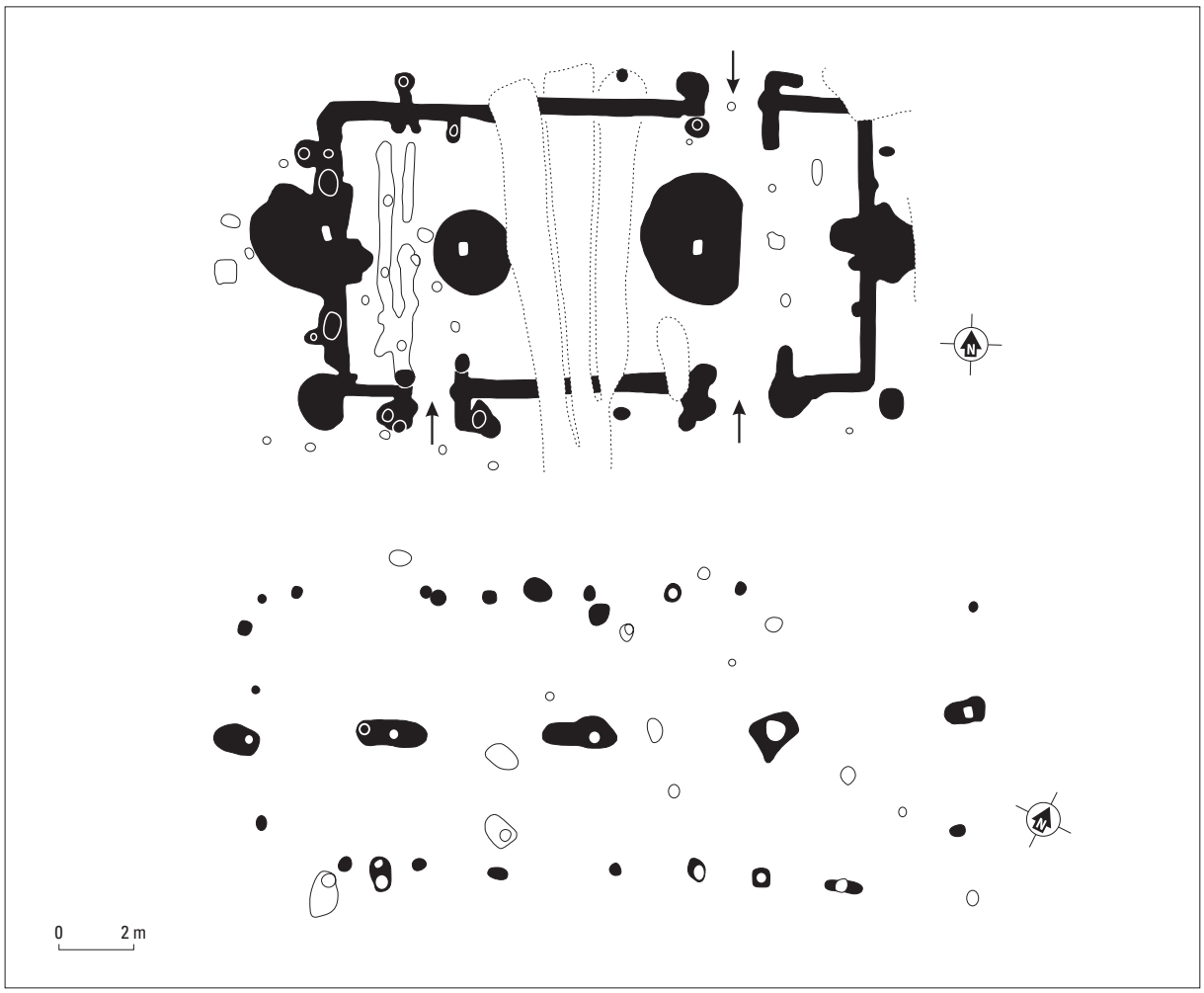

Fig. 3.14 Examples of Alphen-Ekeren type farmhouses. Top: Oss 81, after Schinkel 1998, fig. 110; bottom: Weert, after Tol 1998b, fig. 2.15a.

camps, farmsteads, settlements, market places or urban centres that look at such factors as soil type, the vicinity of water or other natural resources, the topography of the land or lines of communication. Without denying that it was important for Bronze Age and Iron Age farmers to choose a location for a new farmstead in the vicinity of suitable land for cultivation and water, I will turn in this section to a consideration of the social elements that may have been involved.

When a house was built in the Bronze Age or Iron Age, it did not occupy a spot in a hitherto empty natural environment. It was a new element in a cultural landscape that was already largely filled up, perhaps not in a physical sense, but in the sense that the landscape was socialised by centuries of human activity.[66] It was claimed by local communities, and parts of it were already used for cultivation, for existing farmsteads, for pasture, and for burying the dead. The landscape consisted of socially and symbolically meaningful localities and contained the histories of past generations. There is no doubt that locational choices were affected by this. In this section I will focus on one question: how did people locate their farmstead in relation to already existing and recently abandoned farmsteads, and did this change over time? The spatial relationships between farmsteads and other elements of the cultural landscape (cemeteries, cult places, arable lands) will be addressed in the following chapter.

[66] Fontijn 1996, on the concept of socialising landscape.

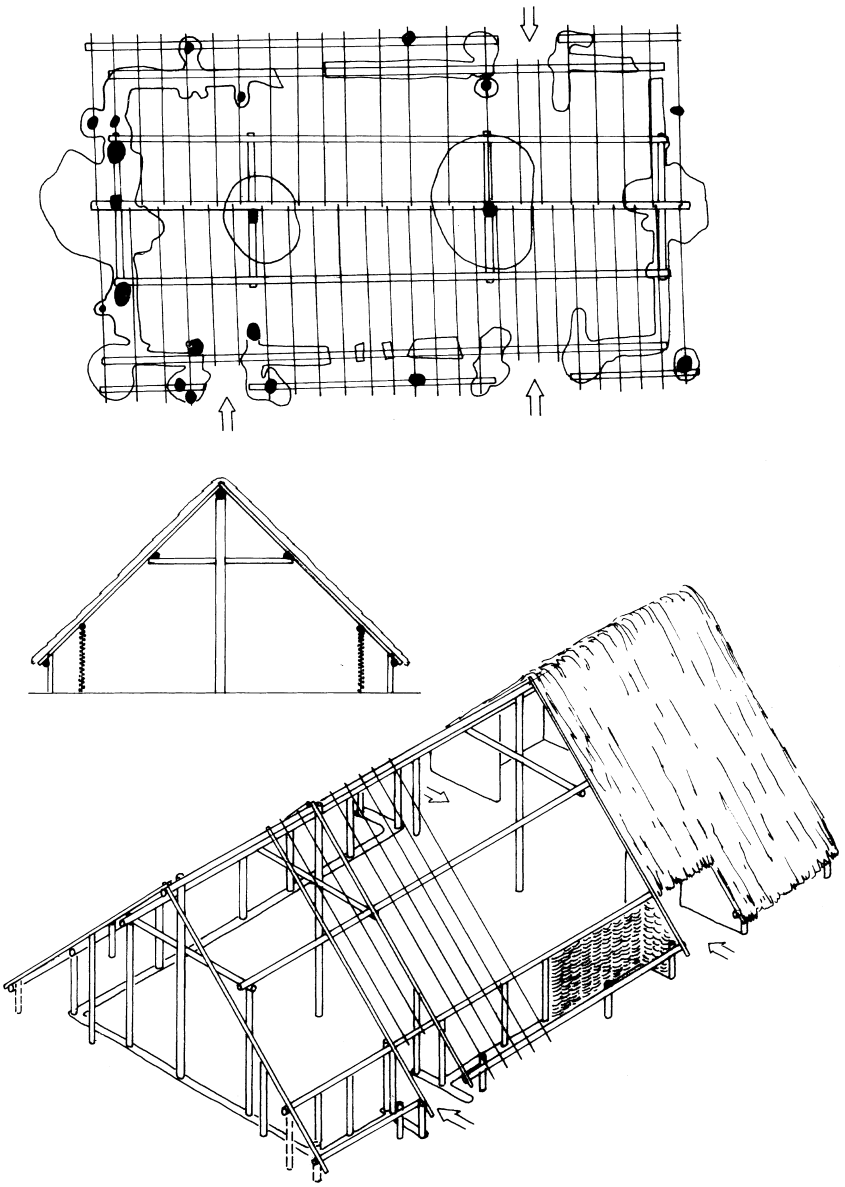

Fig. 3.15 Reconstruction drawing of Alphen-Ekeren type farmhouse (Oss type 8C). From Schinkel 1998, fig. 110.

The small number of Middle Bronze Age houses excavated in the MDS region hardly makes it feasible to say anything about the spatial relationships and the distances between old and new houses. Farmsteads at Geldrop, Oss and Loon op Zand include a single-phase farmhouse, indicating that new houses were constructed away from existing or abandoned farmsteads. At Venray on the other hand, a house was built over the plan of an older one, along the same alignment and with the exterior and interior partition walls in the same position (fig. 3.16).[67] The first house is 25 metres long, the second one 32. Even though there is no concrete evidence, there is little reason to doubt that the second house was built as a successor to the first one, with at most a short period in between. The tradition of building a house at the same spot or directly alongside an older house is fairly common at other Bronze Age sites

[67] Stoepker 1997.

Fig. 3.16 Venray-Hoogriebroek. Generalised plan of excavation trench with Middle Bronze Age farmstead (grey postholes) with rebuilt and enlarged farmhouse (black postholes). After Kris 2000, figs. 8 and 9.

in the Netherlands.[68] In the Holocene landscape of the central riverine region excavations indicate the co-existence of practices of single-phase and multiple-phase farmsteads during the Middle Bronze Age.[69]

The excavations at Oss provide the best information for a discussion of locational practices in the Urnfield period. About ten Early Iron Age houses have been excavated to date (fig. 3.17), in addition to which there are a small number of locations with concentrations of Early Iron Age settlement traces that indicate that there was probably a farmhouse in the near vicinity.[70] Almost all of the farmsteads lie at considerable distances from each other (several hundred metres), and considering that these represent several centuries of occupation, at any particular time the distribution will have been even more dispersed. This can only be interpreted to mean that new houses were built a considerable distance away from existing ones. Only two Early Iron Age houses at Oss lie at a distance of about 25 metres from each other.[71] We cannot rule out that one of the two was built while the other was still in use or shortly after it had been abandoned, although the excavator assumes that the two are separated by a period of about 50 to 100 years.[72] Other excavations in the MDS region have not yielded as many Urnfield-period houses, but enough to establish that locational practices were similar. The relatively small number of excavated farmhouses in comparison to the numbers for the Middle and Late Iron Age can be viewed as an argument supporting the notion of an unstable residence pattern. Had they been more concentrated, their chance of discovery would be greater, and Urnfield-period farmhouses would have been uncovered in greater numbers.

68 IJzereef/Van Regteren Altena 1991 (Hoogkarspel, Andijk); Hessing 1991 (Wijk bij Duurstede, houses 4/5, 6/7).

69 Jongste in press.

70 Schinkel 1998, 36-68; Fokkens 1991a; Jansen 1997; Jansen/Fokkens 1999. So far, occupation traces dating to the Late Bronze Age are quite scarce at Oss.

71 Fokkens 1991a, houses 130 and 131. His assumption is based on the differences in preservation conditions; the remains of the older farm may have suffered from trampling when the second one was inhabited.

72 Fokkens 1991a, 103.

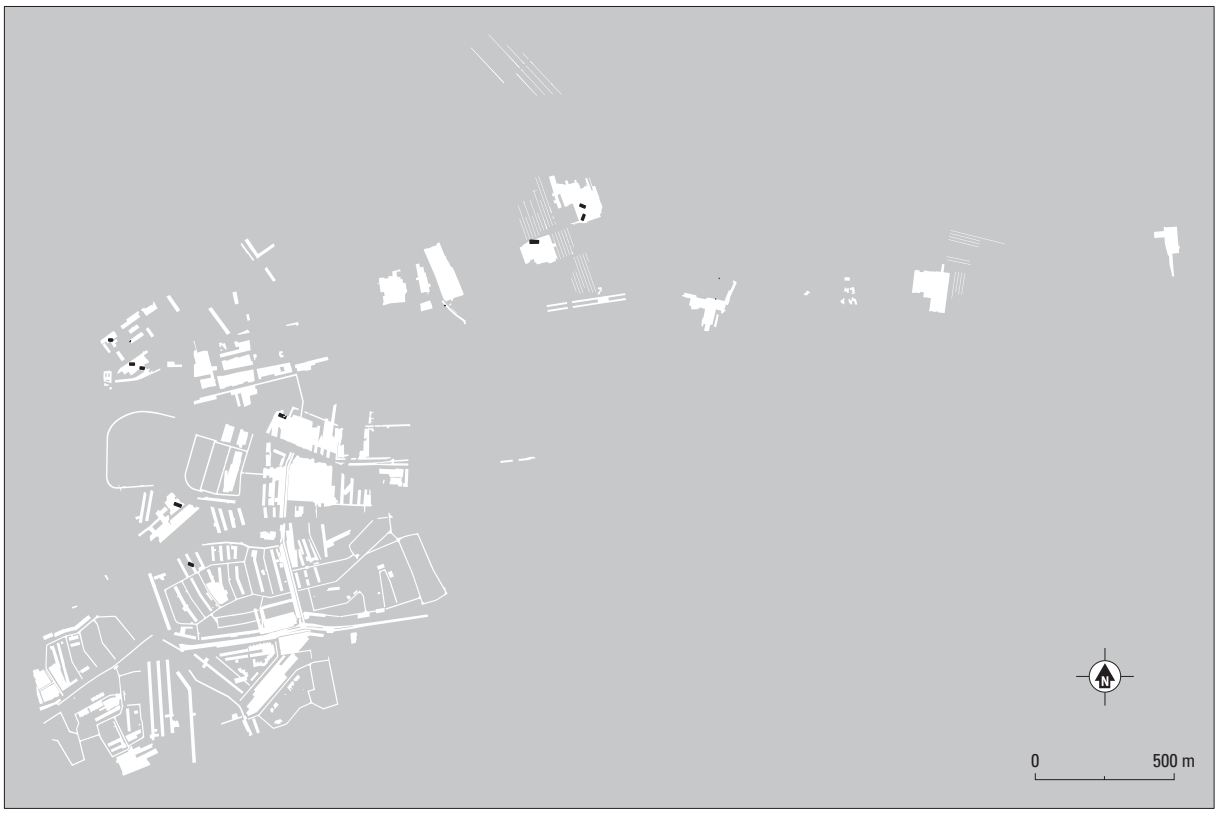

Fig. 3.17 Oss. Overview of the excavations (until 1999), showing highly dispersed distribution of excavated plans of Early Iron Age farmhouses. After Wesselingh 2000, fig. 8.

The Middle and earlier part of the Late Iron Age shows a similar picture, but also the beginning of a new trend. The distribution of farmsteads of this period at Oss is still dispersed, but in a few locations there are also clusters of houses. For example in the south-western part of the Ussen excavations, six Middle Iron Age houses occupy an area of about 100 by 100 metres.[73] Four are Haps-type houses, while two are among the earliest of the Oss-Ussen type and date to the second half of the Middle Iron Age (350-250 BC). At Someren there are dispersed farmsteads as well as two locations where it appears not only that a house was built in the immediate vicinity of an existing or recently abandoned house (fig. 3.18), but that this process was repeated several times.[74] This suggests that during the Middle or earlier part of the Late Iron Age (precise dates for the houses at Someren are unavailable, but the houses are all of the Haps type) the practice of avoiding existing or recently abandoned farmsteads was no longer the only option. The site of Haps itself shows this even more clearly (fig. 4.25).[75] There, 23 houses were excavated of which 20 occurred in a tight cluster covering about 75 by 50 metres. The pottery from this settlement suggests that the total duration of the occupation lasted 200 years, between 400 and 200 BC.[76] If we assume an average life of 25 years for each house, then one could well imagine that the 20 houses represent two or three farmsteads, of which the farmhouses were rebuilt a number of times on the same

[73] Schinkel 1998: houses 14, 16, 26, 27 (all Haps type), and houses 15, 28 (Oss-Ussen type). See also Schinkel 1998, 177, fig. 157, summarising the model for increasing farmstead stability in the Middle and Late Iron Age at Oss.

[74] Kortlang 1999, 180-182.

[75] Verwers 1972.

[76] Van den Broeke 1985, 37.

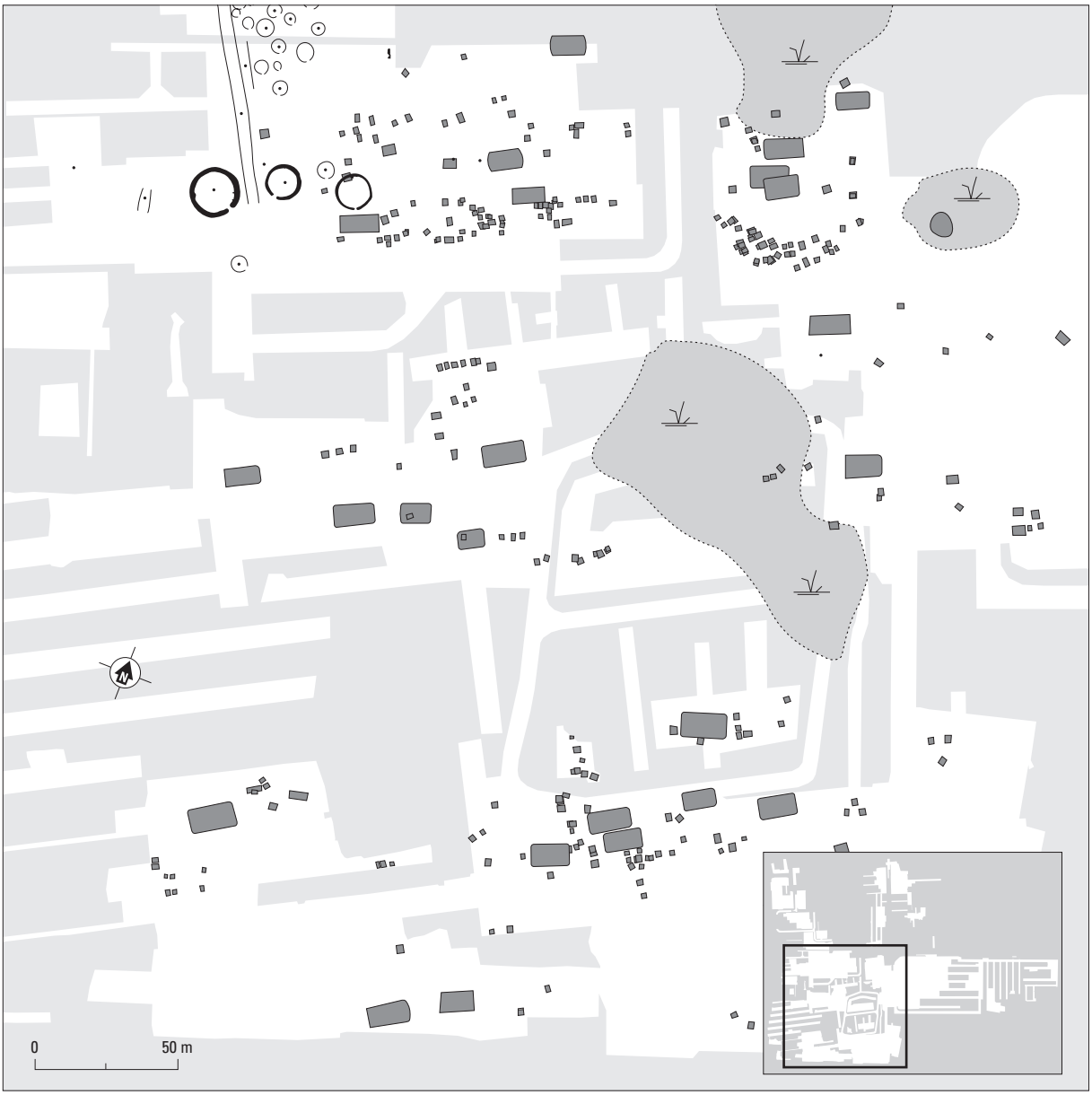

Fig. 3.18 Someren. Segment of the excavated area, showing Middle and Late Iron Age farmsteads to the south of the Early Iron Age urnfield. After Kortlang 1999, fig. 17.

yard. Instead of a tradition of building new houses away from existing or recently abandoned farmsteads, the distribution of Middle Iron Age houses at Haps can be interpreted as the result of a practice of choosing a location for a new house in the direct vicinity of existing houses. Clearly, there is no absolute change in this period in the choice of house location, but we see the beginnings of a trend that gained in strength during the later part of the Late Iron Age and especially during the Early Roman period.

Houses that can be dated with certainty to the second half of the Late Iron Age are not as common as those of the Middle and first part of the Late Iron Age. This is primarily because there are no house types that date exclusively to the Late Iron Age. However, with regard to the choice of location of new houses, there is enough evidence to suggest that the trend that started in the previous period intensified, but did not fully replace the older practice of building a new house away from existing or recently abandoned ones. There are several examples at Oss of farmyards with two or three generations of buildings

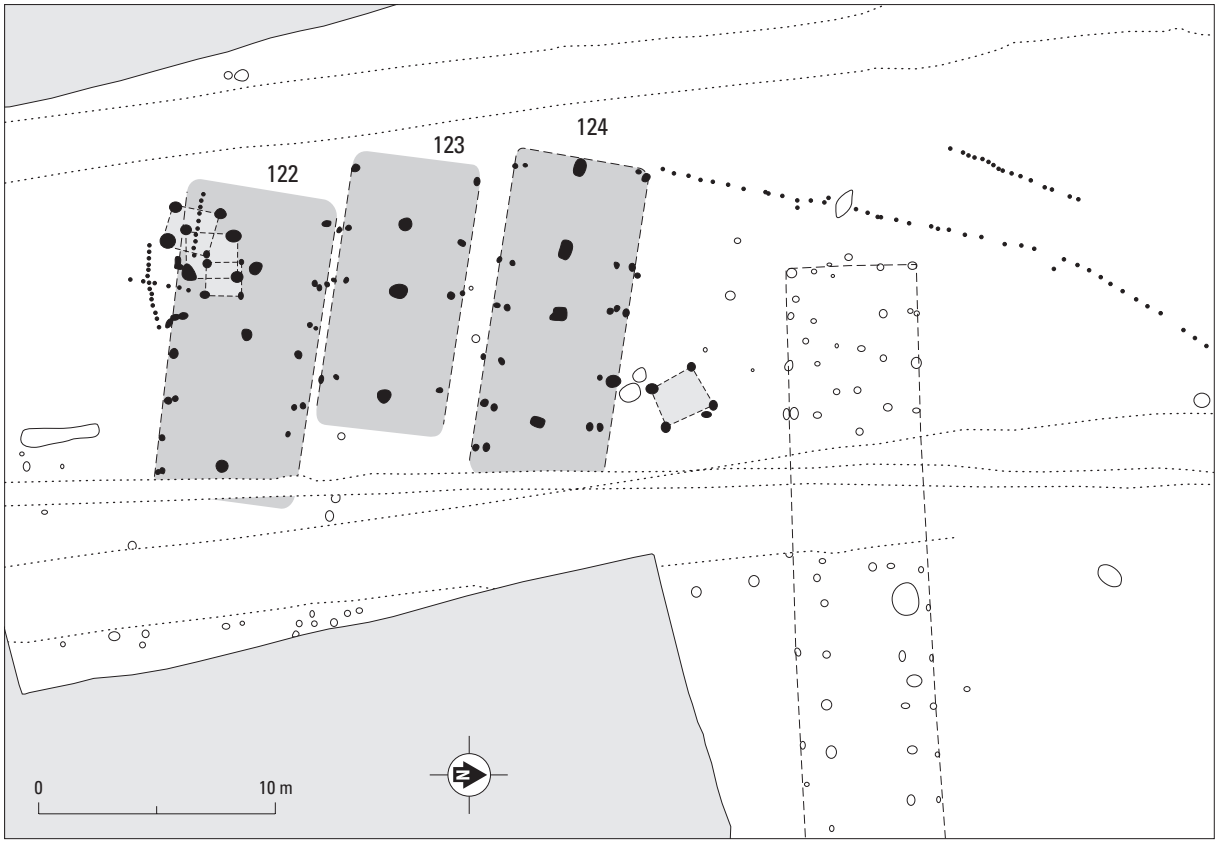

Fig. 3.19 Oss. Late Iron Age farmstead with three Oss-Ussen type farmhouses, presumably representing three consecutive phases of occupation. Also indicated is the location of a Middle Bronze Age farmhouse. After Schinkel 1998, fig. 102.

(fig. 3.19).[77] Other sites, such as Moergestel, dating to the last century BC or 1st century AD,[78] and Weert-Laarderweg,[79] show similar patterns. In particular when houses were built according to the principles of the sturdy Alphen-Ekeren type, this means that a farmstead with a sequence of two or three farms was potentially inhabited for a century or more.

Another change that took place at the end of the Iron Age is related to this practice of building a house on an existing farmyard. This was the process of nucleation. True examples of nucleated settlements – Oss-Westerveld, Weert-Laarderweg, Riethoven and Hoogeloon being prime examples – date to the beginning of the Roman period and later.[80] But it was not a completely new phenomenon in the Roman period. There are examples which indicate that in the Late Iron Age as well people chose to build their house in the vicinity of existing houses, Haps possibly being the earliest settlement where this became a clear pattern. The processes of settlement nucleation will be discussed in more detail in section 4.5.

As was said in the beginning of this section, choosing a site for a new house was a matter of taking many factors into account. The emphasis was placed here on factors related to the existing social land-

77 At Oss-Ussen for example houses 87, 88, 97, and houses 122, 123 and 124 (Schinkel 1998), and at Oss-Almstein houses 10, 15, 11 and 17, 13, 14 (Van der Beek 1996; Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 75-79). The houses at Almstein date to the first half of the Late Iron Age and are probably the first examples at Oss of occupation of a farmyard over several generations.

78 Verwers 1998, 66-67, fig. 32.

79 Tol 1995; idem 1996a.

80 See 4.5 for references and a discussion of settlement nucleation processes.

scape. Several options can now be distinguished: the construction of a new house in a previously unoccupied area of the settlement territory (in other words avoiding existing occupation), building a house on an existing farmyard, which itself is still removed from other farmsteads, or building it on an existing farmstead which is only a short distance from other farmsteads. From a long-term perspective, there are significant shifts visible in the options selected. In the Middle Bronze Age houses were dispersed, although it was probably also not uncommon to rebuild a house on an existing farmstead. The prevailing practice during the Urnfield period was that of building a house away from existing houses. In the archaeological literature the resulting settlement patterns have been described as unsettled settlements,[81] or wandering farmsteads.[82]

In contrast to common interpretations of this pattern as farmhouses that were replaced and relocated at the end of their life cycle, I would suggest that, in light of the presumed link between house biography and domestic cycle, the pattern may also be the result of the formation of new households when grown-up children moved out their parents' house (see fig. 3.1). One difference from a notion of farmstead relocation is temporal; in this scenario the old house continues to be inhabited. A more important difference lies in the emphasis that I place on the social dimensions of house-construction and locationing practices. A practice of periodic residential mobility may have contributed to strategies for restoring soil fertility in the field cultivated around a farmhouse, but would have been embedded in social practices relating to inheritance and the formation and dissolution of new households.

3.2.4 RITUALISED ASPECTS OF HOUSE CONSTRUCTION

The construction of a new house and the formation of a new household must have been a significant moment for the whole local community, and must have led to a reshuffling of social relations within the community and possibly between the different communities from which husband and wife originated. It is therefore to be expected that this phase was marked by ceremonial or ritualised activities. Communal feasts may have been held, with offerings to the ancestors or to protective spirits.

The ethnographic literature offers a broad range of examples. Among the Zafimaniry, a ritual accompanies the inauguration of the house, whereby the woman of the conjugal couple brings kitchen utensils into the house. Taro is cooked with them and shared by all those present. Some of the taro is then smeared on the house posts by a village elder, who asks God and the ancestors to bless the house and people who will live in it.[83] Among the Ara on Sulawesi, many elements of the building process are highly ritualised, and can only be performed under the supervision of a ritual specialist. One of his tasks, which is carried out in the presence of everyone who has assembled to help with the building, is to create a house spirit and to introduce it to the house. The erection of the posts of the house is accompanied by the burial of several types of rice, cooked and raw eggs and a bamboo shoot under the posts.[84]

Both examples illustrate that the creation of a house concerns the whole community. Inauguration rituals are carried out in the presence of more than the future inhabitants. This public aspect may be taken further and continue during the first period of habitation. A newly-built Zafimaniry house is an open structure; anyone can look inside. Only with the passage of time does this change when the roughly woven bamboo is replaced by wood.

81 Schinkel 1998.

82 Gerritsen 1999a; idem 1999b. Both terms, 'unsettled' and 'wandering' farmsteads translate a Dutch term, *zwervende erven*. The German term *Wandersiedlung* is similar but has the disadvantage of not distinguishing between dispersed farmsteads and nucleated settlements.

83 Bloch 1995, 75-76.

84 Gibson 1995, 139-142.

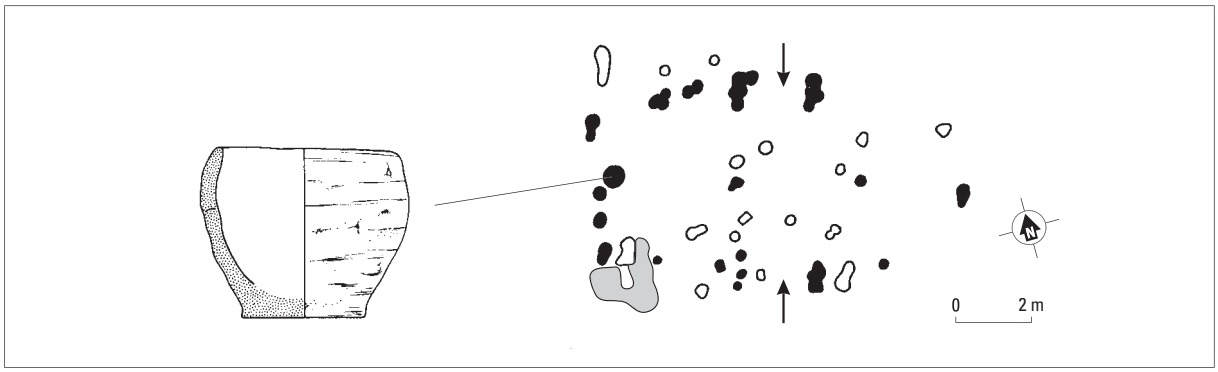

Fig. 3.20 Haps. Plan of house M with location of ceramic vessel (scale 1:4) that had been placed in posthole, presumably a foundation offering. After Verwers 1972, figs. 41 (right) and 51m.

When the building rituals include the deposition of material in the ground in such a way that there is a clear association with the building phase of the house, there is a chance for archaeologists to recognise these rituals from the archaeological record. Generally they are interpreted as foundation deposits. This is rarely the case in the MDS region in Bronze Age and Iron Age contexts, but somewhat more common in the Roman period. There is one example of a probable foundation deposit from the Middle or beginning of the Late Iron Age at Haps (fig. 3.20).[85] A small ceramic vessel was placed at the base of a post in the western wall of house M. Other examples of pottery deposits at the bottom of postholes are known from Roman period Oss (fig. 3.21), Tiel, Nijmegen-Oosterhout and other sites in the riverine region (table 3.5).

One of the reasons for the small number of foundation deposits that have been recognised may be that they tended to consist of organic material, which has a poor chance of survival in the sandy soils of the MDS region. A comparison with other parts of the Netherlands shows that this could partly explain the low numbers. In wetland regions that have been investigated in the last decades, such as the Midden-Delfland area and the Assendelver Polders, foundation deposits dating to the Iron Age and Roman period are more common. The record shows considerable diversity, both in the location of the deposit within the building and the items deposited. Ceramic containers are most numerous, presumably representing the deposition of liquids or foodstuffs. In one case barley grains were found in a pot in a wall ditch, and there is an example of cattle skull parts. A well-known deposit containing animal parts came to light in the early part of the 20th century in the lowest level of the mounded settlement of Ezinge in the province of Groningen. Along the wattle core of the wall of what is presumed to be the oldest house in the settlement, probably in the 4th century BC, skeletal parts of a horse, a bovine, and a dog were placed. This would have been covered by sods that were part of the structure of the house.[86] If this is indeed a deposit that was placed inside the wall at the time of the construction of the house, and not during a phase of wall-repair, then it demonstrates that foundation deposits may not necessarily have been placed below ground. Other examples that are still unique but show a glimpse of the rich nature of ritual deposits in a domestic context include an iron plough-shoe, a flint core from the Mesolithic on a ceramic lid, and a wreath woven of twigs (see table 3.5).

[85] Verwers 1972, 71-72; Van den Broeke 1977. Capelle 1987 for Iron Age examples from Germany.

[86] Van Giffen 1963.

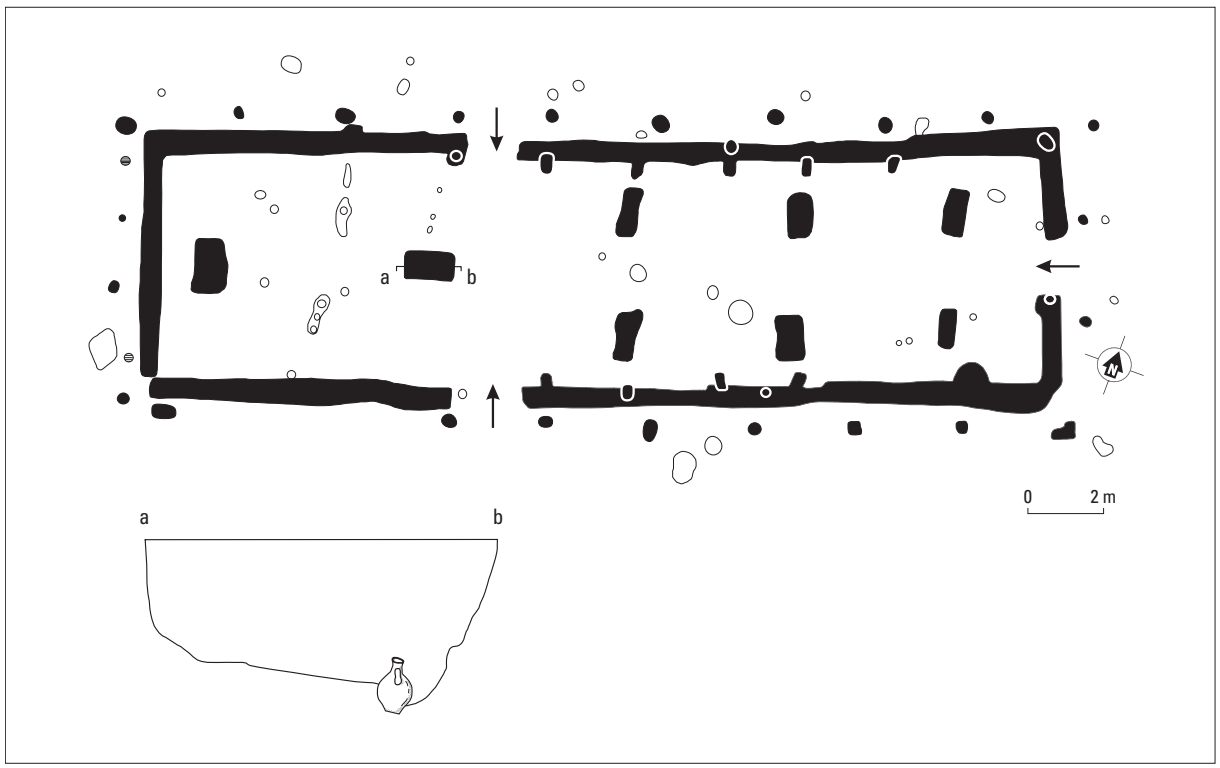

Fig. 3.21 Oss. House 74 with location of ceramic vessel in posthole, presumably a foundation offering. After Wesselingh 2000, 79.

Common locations for foundation deposits are the base of postholes, wall ditches and the area around the entrance. There are also deposits in small pits under the floor, but it can not always be established whether these are related to the phase of building the house, or whether they belong to the phase of occupation or even later. In the Roman period the practice of foundation deposits under the corner of a house appears to be new. Of course, this spatial information has to be treated with some caution. We can only recognise foundation deposits when there is a clear association with the house, in such a way that it is reasonable to assume that the moment of deposition coincided with the building activities. Foundation deposits in other locations will not be recognised as such.

All this suggests that the record for the MDS region is probably severely affected by the poor preservation of organic material. However, in wetland areas organic material makes up only part of the recovered foundation deposits, and, more importantly, the majority of the houses that have been excavated in the wetlands do not show any evidence of foundation deposits. This means either that foundation deposits were the rule but mostly took a form that is not recognisable for archaeologists, or that the practice of placing foundation deposits in the ground was uncommon. I will return to the issue of deposits in settlement contexts in section 3.3.4.

house	description	date	reference
Haps M	complete small bowl at the bottom of the central post in the western wall	MIA/LIA	Verwers 1972
Ekeren	iron knife with whetstone (?) in posthole of entrance farmhouse	LIA	Verbeek/Maes/ Vanwesenbeeck 2001
Oss-Ussen 74	complete vessel (Hofheim 50/51, 40-80 AD) on floor central of posthole	RP (mid 1st c.)	Wesselingh 2000
Oss-Ussen 9	complete tephrite rotary quern (top and bottom) on floor of central posthole	RP (100-150)	Wesselingh 2000
Oss-Ussen 3	complete Belgic beaker in posthole of central upright	RP (150-200)	Wesselingh 2000
Oss-Horzak	Middle/Late Neolithic stone axe in posthole of farmhouse (?)	RP	Fokkens/Jansen 1999
Oss-Horzak	beaker placed over bronze coin in central upright in short wall farmhouse	RP	Fokkens/Jansen 2000
Hoogkarspel site F, 2a/2b	2 miniature ceramic vessels in the posthole of an internal upright. In a later rebuilding phase a miniature vessel in an entrance post	LBA/EIA	Bakker et al. 1968; Van den Broeke 1977
Raalte-de Zegge	bowl with ear in base of posthole of upright, pot with fingernail impressed decoration in base of central post of house	EIA	Terlouw 1996
Assendelft Q	ceramic vessel buried under the floor of the living compartment. In a later phase the pot had been covered by some lengths of wood	EIA	Therkorn 1987, 179, 215
Ezinge	skeletal remains of a horse, a bovine and a dog placed against the outside of wattle wall. Skulls of at least the first two animals were present. State of preservation suggests that they were not exposed to the air, indicating that there was a sod covering of the wattle wall. Presumably the oldest house of the settlement	MIA	Van Giffen 1963
Nijmegen-Oosterhout	3 farmhouses with an imported cup in posthole (2 in posthole on central axis)	RP	Van den Broeke 2002a.
Assendelft F5	pot in wall ditch of small wall-ditch structure with hearth. Foundation or house offering	RIA (1st c.)	Therkorn 1987, 203, 215
Assendelft N1	human femur in posthole of house. Wooden post still present	RIA (1st c.?)	Van Gijn 1987, 101
Midden-Delfland, site 21.23	3 foundation deposits in the northeastern corners of a sequence of 3 houses at the same site. A wreath of woven twigs together with an iron knife in the first two phases, a ceramic lid with a Mesolithic flint core on it in the third phase.	RP (20-120)	Van London 1995, 380
Midden-Delfland, site 1.23	Iron plough-shoe in northern wall ditch of house	RP (2nd c.)	Van London 1994, 430

Table 3.5 Foundation deposits in prehistoric and Roman period houses in the Netherlands, in chronological order. Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region.

3.3 INHABITING THE HOUSE

3.3.1 THE USE AND ORDERING OF SPACE INSIDE HOUSES

One of the defining characteristics of farmhouses from the Middle Bronze Age onwards is the division of the internal space into two main segments by a lateral passage created by two opposite entrances in the long sides of a house.[87] Entrances are usually between one and a half and three metres wide. They are clearly recognisable in many house types, either as a break in the wall ditch or by extra flanking posts that were necessary to carry the roof load. The entrance passage is usually located slightly off-centre, thus creating a bipartite interior with a smaller and a larger section. The presence of a third entrance in one of the short sides is rare in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age. The phenomenon of bipartite houses has a much larger distribution than the MDS region itself; in fact the MDS region represents the southern extension of this *Hauslandschaft*, which spreads through the western, central and northern Netherlands, northern Germany and into Scandinavia.[88]

There is consequently little doubt that the architectural traditions of the MDS region belong to the byre-house tradition, and that the division of houses into two parts corresponds to an internal division into a living and a byre section. In the absence of unambiguous evidence for keeping cattle within the house in the form of individual stalls in the byre, there are three arguments that support this assumption.[89] First, the absence of clear stable compartments in Late Bronze Age and Iron Age plans can be understood as the result of post-depositional transformations, in particular ploughing and pedological processes. Generally only the deepest house posts are preserved, and shallow features such as ditches for planks of stalls can only be recorded under unusually good preservation conditions. Second, even though farmhouses of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age are relatively short in comparison to some Middle Bronze Age and Roman period houses, there would still be space for four to eight head of cattle in houses of around ten metres long. This is clear from Danish examples such as the farmhouses from pre-Roman Iron Age Grøntoft, where stable compartments are clearly recognisable.[90] Third, the houses of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age belong to a continuous tradition of bipartite house types that begins in the Middle Bronze Age and continues well into the Roman period. This tradition differs clearly from architectural traditions in the loess regions to the east and south, where there appears to have been a stronger emphasis on arable cultivation.[91] For the Middle Bronze Age as well as for the end of the Late Iron Age and Roman period there is some evidence of individual stalls in the byre section (cf. fig. 3.34).[92] In the Roman period, moreover, the introduction of sunken byres makes the byre section archaeologically recognisable and indicates that cattle were kept indoors during at least part of the year.[93] Seen from a long-term perspective there may not be positive evidence for in-house byres for each single period, but the continuity in the bipartite layout strongly suggests that Bronze Age and Iron Age farmhouses were byre-houses. I do not wish to claim that each and every house formed the dwelling of both people and cattle, but that this was the predominant trend.

It was mentioned in the previous section that farmhouses of the Northwest-European architectural tradition were built as fully-fledged houses. This means that at the time of construction the builders had to give thought to the changing number of people that would live in the house in future times. The size of dwelling sections in houses thus reflects the perception of the amount of space that would be needed. This observation supports an assumption that is often made for the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, that domestic units consisted of single household groups, nuclear families or small extended families. A married couple and their pre-adult children would have formed the core of such a unit, in addition to

87 Among Middle Bronze Age houses entrances in the short sides of the house are more common than in the later period (Roymans/Fokkens 1991, 9; Roymans/Hiddink 1991a), but in the MDS region there is no predominance of entrances in the short sides as for example in West-Friesland (IJzereef/Van Regteren Altena 1991).

88 Trier 1969; Huijts 1992; Hvass 1993; Roymans 1996b, 52-53, fig. 17; Harsema 1996; Zimmermann 1999a; idem 1999b; Olauson 1999.

89 There have been some attempts in the MDS region to identify byres through phosphate testing, but this has not produced the results that it has in other regions (Van de Wetering/Wansleeben 1987).

90 Becker 1965; idem 1968 and 1971; Rindel 1999.

91 Roymans 1996b, 52-58. House types in the loess regions are beginning to emerge through recent excavations, for example at Sittard (unpublished, Tol pers. comm.). Somewhat further afield, excavations in the German Lower Rhine loess region have yielded separate dwelling and stabling structures (Simons 1989; Göbel 1992). A similar picture emerges from northern France (Haselgrove 1996, 147-161).

92 Middle Bronze Age: Venray houses F and G (Stoepker 1997); Loon op Zand house 1 (Roymans/Hiddink 1991a); Late Iron Age/Roman period: Oss houses 54 (Schinkel 1994, part 2, 78, Late Iron Age) and 105 (Wesselingh 2000, 99-103).

93 Slofstra 1991b, 143; Verwers 1998, 123-124, fig. 69; Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

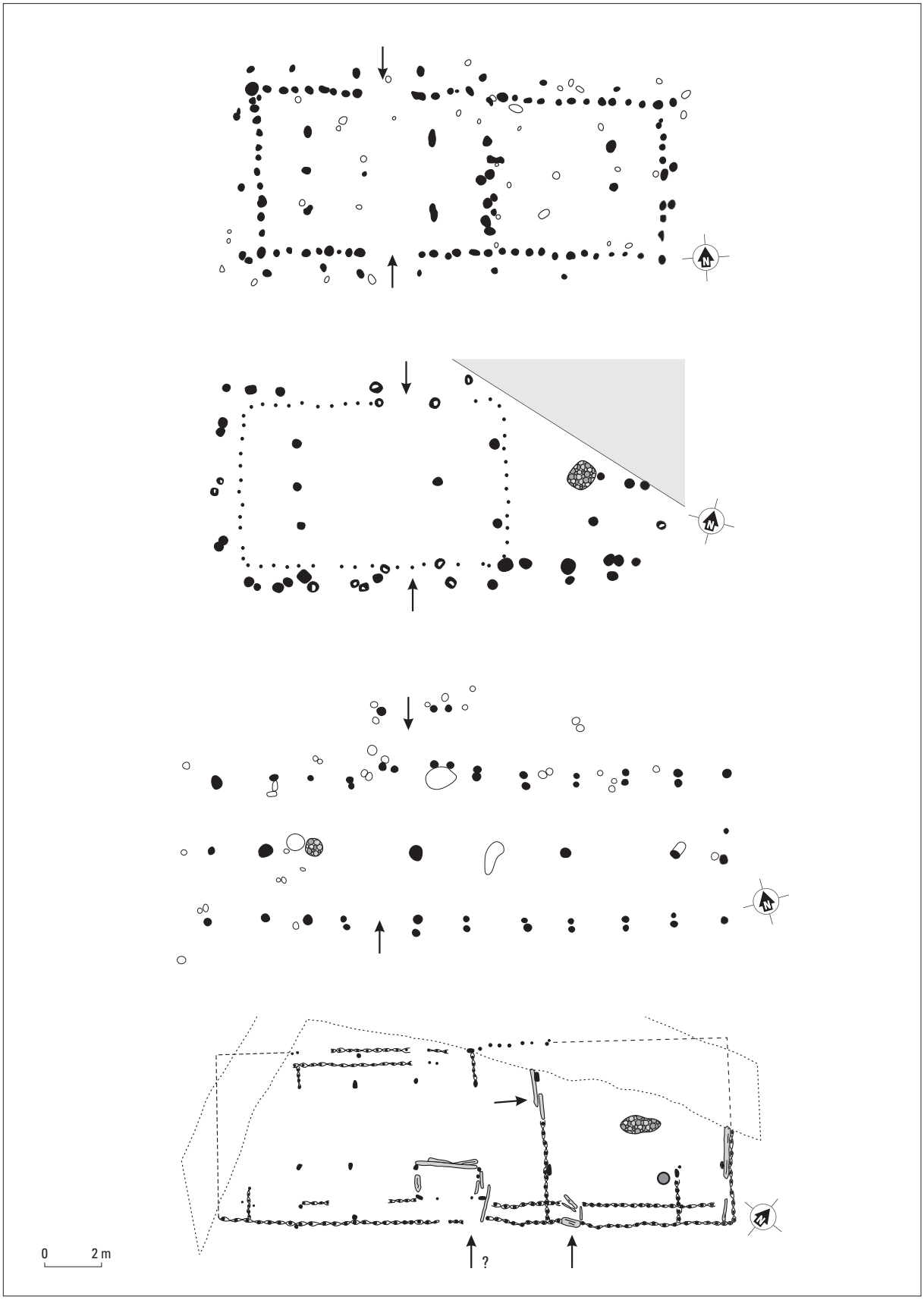

Fig. 3.22 Examples of farmhouses with interior partitionings and hearths. Top to bottom: Oss 130, after Fokkens 1991a, fig. 8; Zijderveld, after Hulst 1975; Amersfoort, after Snieder 1996, 21; Assendelft Q, after Therkorn et al. 1984, fig. 3.

which there may have been widowed parents, unmarried brothers or sisters, and possibly adopted children. There is always variation in house lengths, but houses longer than 20 metres are rare in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, and the average is around 15 metres. Given that house widths do not vary much and are on average around five metres in the interior, this means that the surface area of the dwelling space generally covers between 25 and 30 square metres. Although exceptions are always possible, this makes it hard to imagine that houses were built with the intention of housing multiple domestic groups.[94]

The entrance passage was not the only ordering element of the internal space. There are some examples of relatively well-preserved houses, where the dwelling part of the house is partitioned off by a wattle-and-daub wall (fig. 3.22). In the case of an Early Iron Age house from Zijderveld it appears that the entrances gave access to the byre and that one had to pass through it to reach the living section.[95] In Oss-Ussen house 130, the entrance passage led into the larger section of the house, with an entrance leading from there into the smaller section.[96] Whereas it is generally assumed that the larger section is the byre, it is not certain that this is the case here, as there is a third door in the short side of the house, giving access to the smaller part of the house. An entrance in the short side of a house is often taken as an indication of the presence of the byre on that side.[97]

The occurrence of hearths in excavated houses in the MDS region is not very common. No doubt, this is a matter of post-depositional transformations, i.e. the disappearance of the original floor levels, and it can be assumed that a hearth was a standard feature of all houses. This is the case in regions with better preservation conditions such as the western part of the Netherlands.[98] A tentative description based on the small number of hearths that have been found in the MDS region can be given. In several cases, the hearth consists of a rounded pit with a diameter of 60 to 80 centimetres. In the pit there are sometimes cobbles that do or do not show traces of exposure to fire.[99] In another example, from Oss-Almstein, the pit had a loam lining that had been exposed to fire.[100] At Zijderveld, the hearth consists of a group of rocks covered by large pottery fragments. These do not show traces of secondary burning, suggesting that they may have been covered by a layer of loam or clay.[101] Most hearths are located on the central axis of the house, roughly at a midway point between the entrance bay and one of the short walls of the house. In one case, Sint-Oedenrode house 1, a possible hearth borders immediately on the entrance bay,[102] while in others the hearth is located off-centre in one of the aisles.[103] The interpretation of the latter as hearths must remain somewhat tentative, as the publications do not speak of burnt loam or stones.

94 This need not necessarily have been the case for the Middle Bronze Age and the Roman period, when average house lengths were significantly higher (22,6 and 23,1 metres respectively). In the Roman period there was a house type that occurred in the northern part of the MDS region and the riverine area with a three-aisled byre section with two-aisled sections on both sides (Van Es 1982; Wesselingh 2000, 90-94). The two-aisled parts may both have been used as dwelling areas, and one could envisage a multiple household dwelling for these cases. The evidence for the Middle Bronze Age is less clear as far as the MDS region is concerned. In the sandy landscapes in the northern Netherlands, at Bronze Age sites such as Emmerhout and Dalen, there are houses with a byre flanked by possible dwelling areas (Huijts 1992, 36-49).

95 Hulst 1975; Theunissen 1999, 162-163.

96 Fokkens 1991a.

97 Waterbolk 1975, 384-385.

98 Therkorn 1987a; idem 1987b; Van Trierum 1992.

99 Zijderveld (Hulst 1975); Amersfoort (Snieder 1996); Echt-Mariahoop (Willems 1983).

100 Van der Beek 1996, house 10.

101 Hulst 1975, 106.

102 Van Bodegraven 1991.

103 Weert, house 14/15 (Tol 1996b); Goirle-Groote Akkers: Hendriks/Van Nuenen 1989a.

The accessibility of indoor spaces in farmhouses may have been socially differentiated. In the case of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age houses, it is likely that the entrance passage was the most public part of the house, and that access to it was open to a fairly large group of people. It is hard to say whether the same can be said about the byre. Possibly the byre was accessible to only a small group of people outside the household itself. The living area was probably an area of relatively private space, one that only a small group of non-household members could enter uninvited.

Partitioning walls would have strengthened the private nature of the living area. In the well-preserved Early Iron Age house Q in the Assendelver Polders, a corner of the area behind the hearth was partitioned off (fig. 3.22).[104] The excavators interpreted this as a sleeping area. In Roman Iron Age Feddersen Wierde, partition walls in the living area were common. Usually a dividing wall is connected to one of the last pair of internal uprights, and one can well imagine that these spaces were used as sleeping areas.[105] There are several examples of ground plans in the MDS region that include a row of three or four postholes parallel to and near one of the short walls of the house.[106] These do not appear to have been part of the structural construction of the house and they may represent the remains of partition walls. In a 2nd or 3rd century AD byre-house in Weert (house 6) an area of 5.5 by 3.5 metres was sectioned off by a wall with a narrow wall ditch between the short side of the house and the first internal upright.[107]

Even without evidence for partitions in the living area, there may have been physically or symbolically demarcated areas. The hearth in the centre would have divided the living space into an area in front of it and an area behind it, and one could postulate that this marked a division into relatively public space in front of the hearth and private spaces behind it. Some non-household members may have been allowed to enter uninvited into the area in front of the hearth and guests may have been entertained there, but sleeping areas would have been towards the back wall.

3.3.2 THE FARMYARD

While the emphasis so far has been on the central feature of farmsteads – the house – a significant proportion of daily life will have taken place in the yard around the house. This can be loosely defined in an archaeological sense as the area in which secondary structures are located. These structures – both above and in the ground – were used for storage, water collection, keeping animals, food preparation, craft activities, ritual etc. In many cases the precise function of pits or small buildings cannot be determined, but a bigger problem lies in the palimpsest nature of most sites. An Early Iron Age house can be accompanied by some Middle Iron Age granaries and a Late Iron Age well, but where there are not enough datable finds associated with these features, it is easy to assume mistakenly that they were contemporaneous. When features of different periods are present in a single area, it becomes almost impossible to assign the undatable features of the cluster to a particular phase. Moreover, given the resolution of the pottery chronology, a feature can be assigned at best to a 75 to 100 year phase. In other words, even structures with the same archaeological dating need not have been contemporaneous. While this calls for caution in the identification of farmyard elements, the data set contains valuable information on the spatial organisation of farmyards.

[104] Therkorn 1987a, 214.

[105] Haarnagel 1979, e.g. figs, 21, 26 27, 32.

[106] E.g. Someren (Kortlang 1999, 181, fig. 22); Oss houses 27, 47 (Schinkel 1998, 213, 218); Geldrop house 5 (Wesdorp 1997).

[107] Tol 1996b, 33.

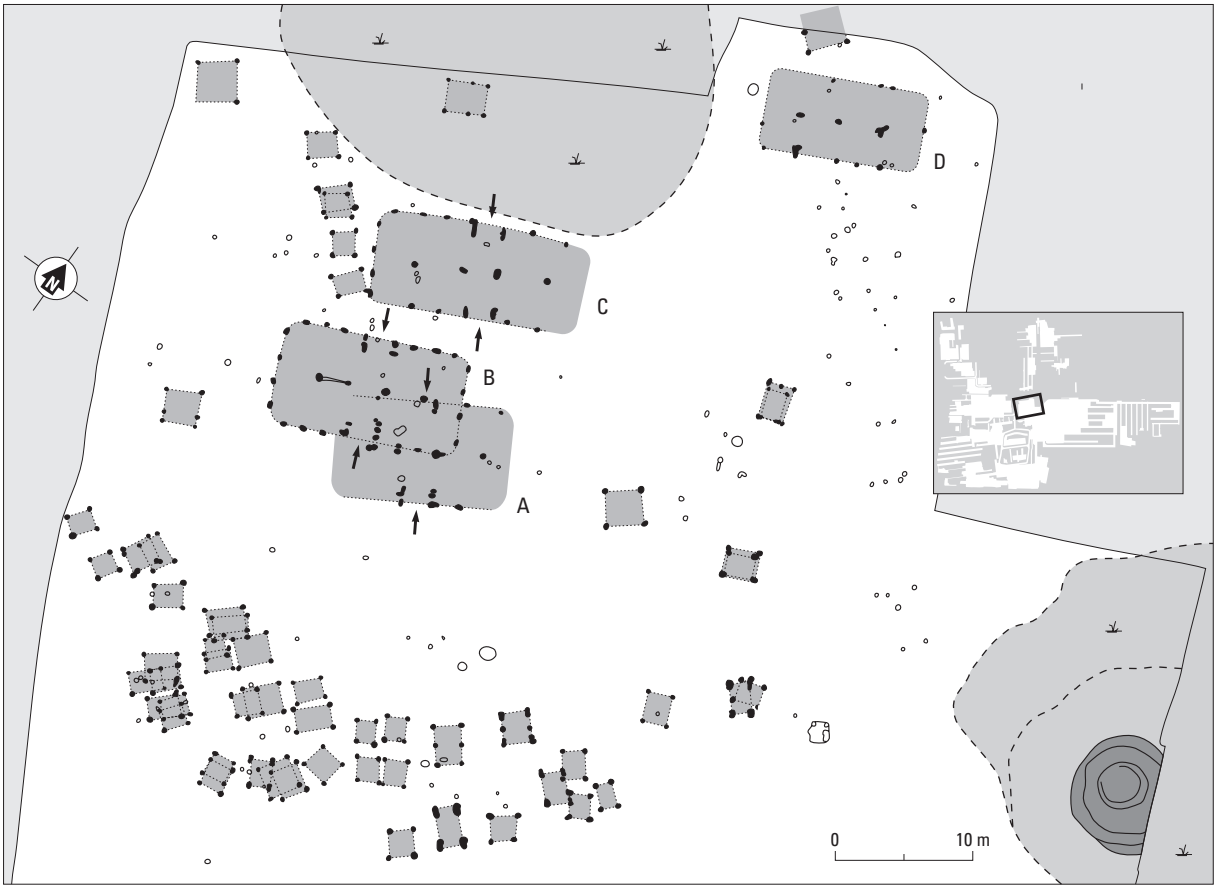

Fig. 3.23 Someren. Middle Iron Age farmstead with four Haps-type houses (A-D), presumably representing a stable farmstead with three of four consecutive phases of occupation. After Kortlang 1999, fig. 21.

Secondary structures and storage facilities

The most common secondary structures on farmyards are small square or rectangular constructions of four to nine posts (fig. 3.23). They occur on all farmyards, and represent the remains of storage structures with elevated floors, used for storing goods in such a way to prevent moisture or vermin from rising up from the ground. Often four-posters or six-posters are assumed to have been for the storage of threshed or unthreshed grain or hay, but there is no reason to assume that other foodstuffs and non-edible goods or implements were stored elsewhere. In order to be able to support a raised floor, and presumably a roof as well, a sturdy construction was required. This explains the often considerable depth of the postholes of these structures. There is evidence that separate storage structures of this type were in use as early as the Middle Bronze Age,[108] and they occurred throughout the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age. Their use diminished in the Roman period, at least in some of the rural settlements of that period. During this last period a larger type of storage structure appeared alongside four and six-posters. These have a raised floor, usually on nine or twelve posts, surrounded by wall posts.[109] The reconstructed floor surface of datable Iron Age granaries (only a minority of them yield datable finds) at the site of Oss ranges between two and 19 square metres, with an average around six and a half square metres. The average during the Roman

[108] Roymans/Fokkens 1991, 10; Theunissen 1999, 124, 145, 163.

[109] Wesselingh 2000, 30, 58-59, 112-114.

period was around 28 square metres, the largest being over 80 square metres. This suggests either an increase in the amount of grain grown and stored or a change in storage strategies, whereby storage was concentrated in fewer granaries.

Another way of storing grain and other foodstuffs is in underground storage pits. Storage pits can be divided into two categories, both of which occur on Late Bronze Age and Iron Age farmyards. There are silos, in which bulk grain is stored under an airtight cover of soil or dung, and there are storage pits or cellars in which vessels, sacks or boxes were placed. While the former is more suitable for long-term storage, the advantage of the latter is that the goods are readily accessible. It is not always easy to determine the storage technique on the basis of the shape and diameter of pits. Ideally, silos have a roughly conical shape, with a narrow diameter at the mouth and a broader diameter at the base. These have been found mainly at sites bordering on or in the loess regions, such as Rosmeer.[110] The sandy soils to the north may not have allowed for such a shape without extra support from a wattle lining. Traces of wattle have been reported from a Middle Bronze Age pit at Nijnsel.[111]

It is not uncommon for a layer of charred grain to be preserved on the bottom of a silo. Botanical analyses give an impression of the types of grain cultivated and consumed. Barley, emmer and millet are dominant, while oats and chess occur less frequently.[112] The nature and origin of these charred grain layers is uncertain. Sometimes it is clear that the material was burnt in situ, while in other cases the grain appears to have been deposited after being charred somewhere else. In paragraph 3.3.4 I will return to this topic and discuss possible interpretations.

There is little that can be said about the location of storage structures on farmyards. Farmyards appear to be loosely structured, with granaries occurring individually or in small groups. In some cases there are larger clusters that appear to stand along a visible or invisible boundary of the yard (fig. 3.23).[113] The distance from the farmhouse varies, and some authors have suggested that storage structures also occurred in isolation in the fields.[114] The number of storage structures per farmyard shows a great deal of variation, from one or two to over twenty in some cases. Presumably, storage structures needed replacement more frequently than the house itself, and at any point in time only a small number would have stood and functioned near a farmhouse. The number of storage structures on a farmyard may thus give a rough indication of the duration of occupation of the yard and the house or houses on it.

There does not seem to have been a consistent choice made for either storage in pits or in Aboveground granaries. There are sites that do not show any evidence of storage pits, but that do have four-posters, such as the Middle Bronze Age sites in the Holocene riverine regions and at Oss, where the water table may have been too high for storage underground. On the other hand, sites that have storage pits always have granaries as well. This could, of course, be related to the fact that some of the grain would have been stored for use within the following months, whereas the remainder would have been stored for longer periods of time, for consumption or as seed grain. There is also a diachronic development. Storage pits and silos are more frequent in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age contexts than in the Middle and Late Iron Age.

110 Roosens/Lux 1969.

111 Beex/Hulst 1968.

112 Roymans 1985b; 1990, 103-108; Vanderhoeven 1991; Bakels 1998; Stoepker 1991a, 260 (chess: *Bromus secalinus*); De Hingh 2000, 123-127.

113 Kortlang 1999, fig. 21.

114 Verlinde 1997, 159; Van der Beek 1996, 35-40; M. Kok, pers. comm.

Fig. 3.24 Oss-Mettegeupel. Overview of excavation trenches, with farmsteads dating to the Early, Middle and Late Iron Age. The farmyard of a Middle Iron Age house in the northern section is surrounded by a fence. In the centre of the northern section lies a square ditched structure, probably a Middle or Late Iron Age isolated grave monument associated with one of the farmyards. After Fokkens 1996, fig. 5.

Wells

Wells are not a frequent occurrence at Bronze Age and Iron Age excavations on the higher sandy areas. Until recently, it appeared that they were largely restricted to regions bordering on the riverine zones to the north.[115] Recent large-scale excavations, however, have shown that wells were more widespread, with finds from Someren, Weert, Mierlo-Hout and Kontich.[116] Several techniques were used to keep the pit from collapsing. Hollowed-out trees are known from the Middle Bronze Age, and continue into later periods. Other common constructions include wickerwork of twigs and circular settings of vertical posts or planks.[117] This last technique was used in an Early or Middle Bronze Age well at Oss-Schalkskamp.[118]

[115] Roymans/Fokkens 1991, 10-11.

[116] Someren: Kortlang 1999, 182-184; Weert: Tol 1998b, 26-27; Mierlo-Hout: Tol 1999, 116-119, fig. 18; Kontich: Annaert 1996a.

[117] Schinkel 1998, 267-268.

[118] Fokkens 1992, 159-160. ^{14}C dates date the well to ca. 1850 BC (Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 64).

Combinations of techniques, especially a hollow tree trunk in combination with a square or circular setting of posts or wickerwork, are fairly frequent.

The fact that wells are not a frequent find on excavations of prehistoric settlements is probably because of the distance between farmyards and wells, which means that they tend to be missed in small-scale excavations. At Someren depressions in the terrain were chosen as the location for wells. These consisted of basin-shaped pits with a diameter of four to six metres, dug to about two metres below the excavation level.[119] Even when wells further away from the farmsteads are taken into account, however, wells are often rare when compared to the number of nearby farmsteads and years of occupation.

Farmyard boundaries

The social and cultural significance of the construction and use of physical boundaries in settlement contexts has been noted by a number of authors.[120] In addition to the obvious functional uses of ditches or fences, aspects of social exclusion, status, and ritual have been stressed. Much of this literature, however, deals primarily with enclosures of larger settlement units rather than individual farmsteads. In the MDS region, when there is good evidence for boundaries, it usually consists of ditch systems surrounding small nucleated settlements, and the matter will therefore be treated in more detail in chapter 4.5.3.

At the level of individual farmsteads, evidence for a practice of bounding off the farmyard is scarce, but not wholly absent. At the site of Oss, linear features of small posts set close together indicate the location of wickerwork fences.[121] Due to the often fragmentary nature and the lack of finds from them, it is often impossible to relate fences to other settlement features. Short stretches of fencing sometimes occur around wells – perhaps to keep animals away from the water.[122] In a few other cases they may have marked a farmyard boundary. Examples come from the Middle Bronze Age and the Urnfield period at Oss-Mikkeldonk,[123] and from the Middle Iron Age at Oss-Mettegeupel (fig. 3.24).[124] In this last case, a fence made of posts with a 20 cm diameter set 50 cm apart appeared to the north and east of a Haps-type house. In both sides there was an entrance giving access to the farmyard, which also included seven granaries and possibly a well. The total area of the farmyard cannot be reconstructed, but that part (half?) of it that lies to the north of the house measures approximately 45 by 20 metres. While this fence appears to represent a relatively sturdy and permanent farmyard boundary, excavations at the Middle Bronze Age site of Zijderveld in the riverine area to the north of the MDS region have yielded a house that was surrounded by a multitude of fences.[125] They continue outside the farmyard and may also have functioned as field boundaries. The large number of fences suggests that they had a temporary nature and were replaced frequently.

It is clear that features such as fences that were not dug or driven deeply into the ground are only found when soil traces are preserved close to the level of the original surface. Given the rarity of this situation in the MDS region, one has to question whether farmyard boundaries were uncommon in the Bronze Age and Iron Age, or whether the evidence from Zijderveld and Oss can be extrapolated to other parts of the region, and that the use of fences to close off farmyard space was a widespread practice. Ditches surrounding individual farmyards do not appear until the Roman period, and even then they are rare.[126]

[119] Kortlang 1999, 184.

[120] E.g. Bowden/McOmish 1987; Hingley 1990, R. Thomas 1997.

[121] Schinkel 1998, 298-305.

[122] Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 92.

[123] Fokkens 1991a, houses 128 and 132.

[124] Fokkens 1996, 207-208.

[125] Theunissen 1999, 167-169.

[126] At Oss-Westerveld (Wesselingh 2000, 165). In the Roman period (as well as at the end of the Late Iron Age, see 4.5.3) a ditch enclosing a cluster of several farmsteads is more common (e.g., Hoogeloon, Oss-Westerveld; Verwers 1998, 62-77).

There is a certain degree of variation in the spatial organisation of farmyards, caused by the presence or absence of pits and the number of secondary structures. But a look at long-term patterns indicates a remarkable continuity when it comes to the elements of farmsteads. A farmstead of the Urnfield period consisted of roughly the same basic elements as one in the Late Iron Age: a byre-house with one or more granaries and/or silos, occasionally a small barn, and possibly a well and other, less well definable, structures. Throughout the Bronze Age and Iron Age, there do not appear to have been fixed notions relating to the proper ordering of these elements. On the whole, farmyards appear to be diffuse and loosely structured.

One element that may have occurred on Late Iron Age farmyards but that would not have been common on earlier ones is an abandoned house or house ruin. In a situation of increasing stability in the location of houses, recently abandoned houses may have been re-used secondarily for storage, stabling animals, as a source of building materials, and as a symbolic link to former inhabitants and ancestors. This will be treated in more detail in section 3.4.3.

3.3.3 FARMSTEAD AND HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS

The importance of time and the temporal dynamics of houses and settlement spaces were discussed in the introduction to this chapter and they underlie its organisation. The background to this is the theoretical notion that houses are dynamic. Both the physical construction and the social and symbolic meanings change over the course of the life cycle of a house. In section 3.2 the creation of houses and households was discussed; this section is concerned with the 'growing' and 'ageing' house and the concurrent and embedded domestic cycle of the household (fig. 3.1).

Given the lack of stratigraphic build-up and the general scarcity of intersecting postholes, it is a matter of informed guesswork to distinguish which features of the ground plan were part of the original construction and which were later additions or replacements ('informed' because enough examples of the main house types have been excavated to be able to identify those elements that formed part of the basic construction of a farmhouse). Other postholes and wall ditches, especially when they appear to duplicate original features, can be assumed to represent later additions. In this way, a kind of biography can be written for the better preserved plans, which describes its history of repairs, replacements, and modifications. Of course, this is a very incomplete biography; it does not say anything about the relative chronology of changes, nor does it include any of the changes that did not leave traces in the soil. The value of this analysis lies mainly in the overall patterns that it brings out, the information it provides regarding questions about the average or typical biography of a house in a given period, and the light it sheds on the possibilities that were open to a household for adjusting their house to changing needs and desires, and those that for technical or cultural reasons were deemed impossible. The evidence for house biographies can be divided into several categories: repairs and replacements that did not modify the basic plan; extensions and modifications that did change the plan but not the bipartite character of a byre-house; and extensions in which a second unit of roughly the same size and layout was built against an existing house, thereby doubling the plan.

Table 3.6 shows for different periods the number of houses for each of these categories. While in every period there is a sizeable group of houses that do not seem to have undergone major repairs, over 40% of the plans indicate that repairs and minor reconstructions took place somewhere during the period that the house was inhabited. These include replacements of wall sections, the replacement or addition of posts that were part of the entrance, or of posts that belonged to the carrying frame of the house (fig. 3.25). These are the kind of changes that were not uncommon (given the high percentage of houses that show evidence of them), but that probably did not form part of the periodic maintenance of a house. Periodic maintenance would have included activities such as renewing the floor, replastering the

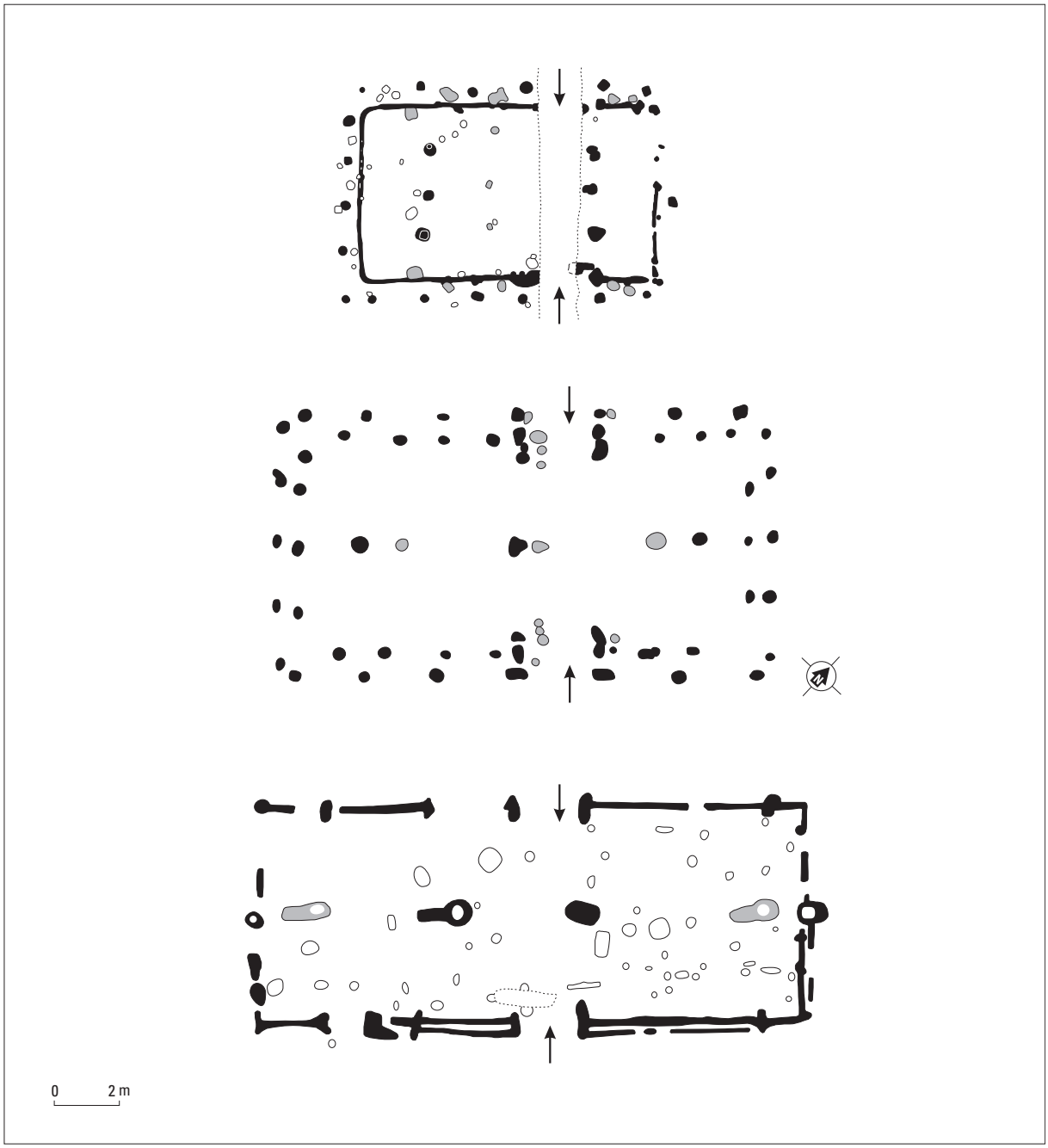

Fig. 3.25 Examples of farmhouses with traces of repairs and replacements (indicated in grey). Top to bottom: Den Dungen 1, after Verwers 1991a, fig. 3; Oss 27, after Schinkel 1998, fig. 68; Weert, after Tol 1995, fig. 9c.

walls with loam, and mending the thatched roof. In fact, (apart from the replacement of wall posts in those house types where the wall did not constitute a structural element of the roof construction) repairs and reconstructions would have required a significant effort, and may well have involved help from outside the household itself.

A second category represents more drastic modifications and occurs less frequently. In about 10% of the cases the house was modified to such an extent that the original plan changed (fig. 3.26). Usually this means that an extension was built to one or both of the short sides of a house. In some cases, such an

	MBA/LBA/EIA (n = 42)	MIA/early LIA (Haps-type houses; n = 32)	later LIA (including first half 1st c. AD; n = 58)	examples per category
clear absence of repairs	3	3	1	7
probable repairs	12	10	23	45
repairs without modifications to the plan	19	17	25	61
modifications that altered the plan	6	1	5 (+2 uncertain)	12-14
double(d) houses	4	0	5 (+2 uncertain)	9-11
secondary use of house after dwelling phase	5	1 (uncertain)	0	5-6

Table 3.6 Frequencies of repairs, major renovations and secondary uses of houses per period. Only those houses have been included that were preserved well enough to show the presence or absence of changes to the original plan. The numbers in the table do not match the totals per period, as more than one type of modification may have occurred in a single plan.

extension may not have been more than a small room or shed which was entered from the outside, but in other cases it is more likely that the original short wall was partially or completely removed to increase the total interior space. Both extensions on the side of the living area and on the side of the byre occur. A house from Den Dungen that was tentatively dated to the Early Iron Age was extended in both directions, increasing the total length of the house from twelve to nineteen metres (fig. 3.26).[127] There are no indications that new entrances were built to give access to the new parts of the house.

A final category of houses, from the Urnfield period and the Late Iron Age and Early Roman period, belongs to a third category (table 3.7). These are houses of above-average length that consist of two units, separated by a partition wall, and entrances into both parts (fig. 3.27). In some cases both units may have been constructed at the same time as one 'double' house, while in others it is clear that one of the units formed a later addition to an already existing house. The question is whether these double houses formed a single unit with a very large byre and a very large dwelling area, or whether they included two domestic units. The fact that both segments of double houses have their own entrance passage suggests the latter. In an Urnfield-period double house at the site of Loon op Zand, a large, rectangular storage pit was located to the left of the southern entrance in both units (fig. 3.27). This also suggests that we may be dealing with a house that was inhabited by two households. It is a matter of speculation how we should envisage the composition of the group of inhabitants of a double house. Are we dealing with one household head with two wives (this appears to fit the cases where a second unit was added later, but not the assumption that there were two byre sections), or are we dealing with two household heads who for some reason decided to combine their houses (two brothers, a father and grown-up son)?

If the house was prone to change during its life cycle, this was certainly true of the farmyard. Changes in the composition and layout of the farmyard occur more frequently than major adjustments to the house. It is not uncommon, for example, for there to be ten or more four or six-post storage structures associated with a single house. Even when none of these overlap each other, it is unlikely that they all stood at the same time. The storage capacity of a single two-by-two metre granary would have been sufficiently large to hold the yearly grain consumption of a six-person household.[128] Since there is no reason to surmise a surplus production of ten times the necessary grain supplies, it is likely that, on average, a farmyard contained two or three storage structures that were periodically replaced.

Given the intertwined nature of household and house, one can expect the physical appearance of the house and farmstead to carry symbolic messages about the household.[129] To someone acquainted with the

[127] Verwers 1991a, 166-167.

[128] Slofstra 1991a, 146.

[129] Gerritsen 1999a; idem 1999b.

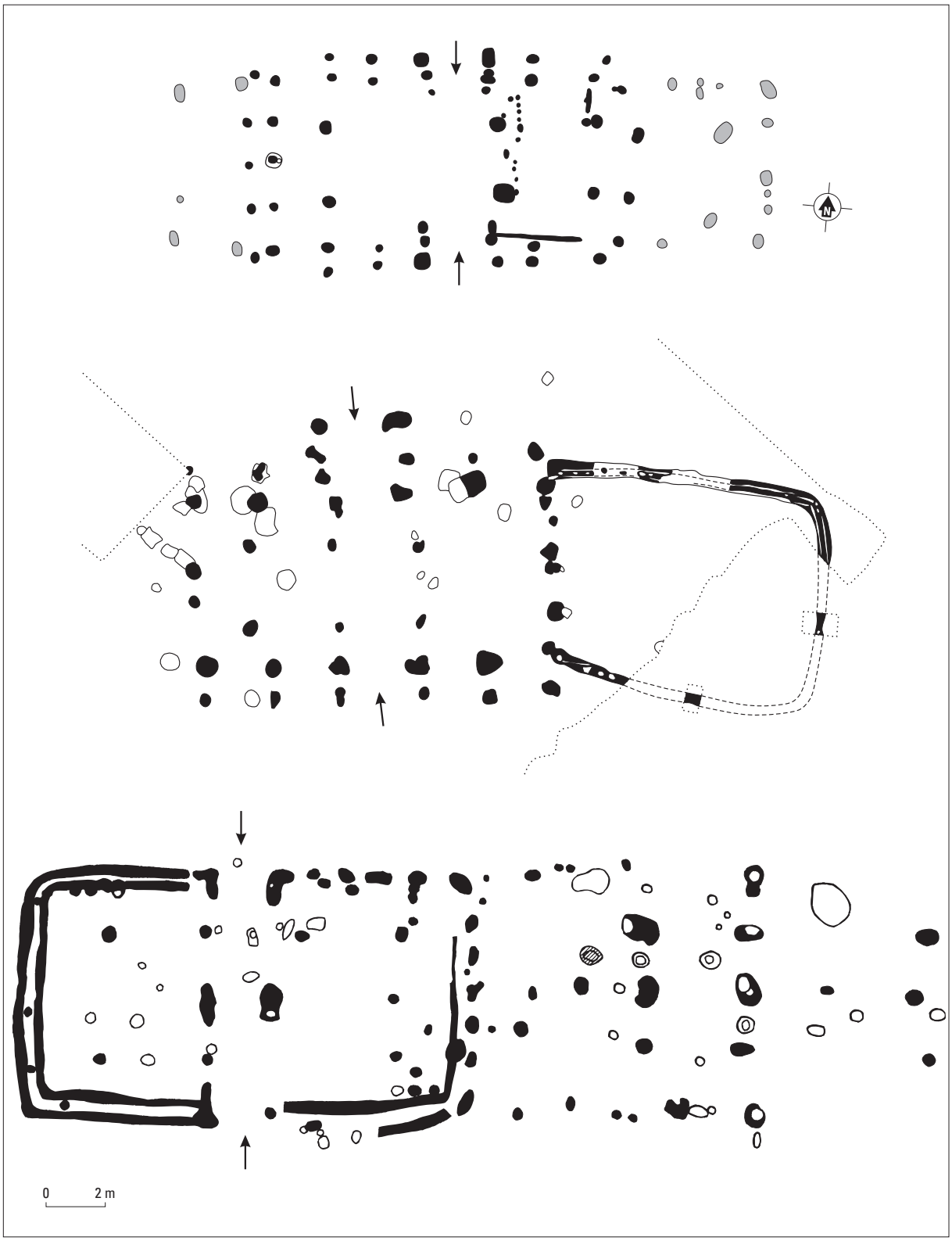

Fig. 3.26 Examples of farmhouses with traces of enlargements and extensions. Top to bottom: Den Dungen 3, after Verwers 1991a, fig. 5; Mierlo-Hout, after Tol 1999, fig. 20; Weert 14/15, after Tol 1996b, fig. 4.4.

house	description	date	reference
Loon op Zand 3	house (24 x 8 m), divided into 2 similar parts by a dividing wall. Both parts have two opposite entrances and a rectangular storage pit next to the southern entrances.	EIA	Roymans/Hiddink 1991a
Someren D-E	house (28 x 8.5 m), with two parts of unequal length, separated by posts of possible dividing wall. Large pits in both sections. Entrances unclear	EIA	Kortlang 1999
Breda-Moskes 3	house (25 x 7 m), with two parts divided by a partly preserved wall-ditch. Double entrances into both parts.	EIA	Van den Eynde/ Berkvens 2001
Oss-Mettegeupel	possible double house, with interior dividing walls	EIA	Fokkens 1996
Hilvarenbeek	possible double house (Oss-Ussen type)	MIA/LIA	Verwers 1975
Den Dungen 1	house (28.5 x 6.2 m), divided into two sections by wall. Entrances unclear	LIA	Verwers/Van den Broeke 1985
Oss-Ussen 102	house (29.5 x 6 m), Oss-Ussen type	LIA	Schinkel 1998
Oss-Ussen 20/21, 53	2 possible double houses (Oss-Ussen type)	LIA	Schinkel 1998
Weert 14-15	house (c. 31 x 8.5 m), consisting of 2 segments. One part with double wall ditches. Probably entrances into both segments.	LIA/ERP	Tol 1996b
Oss-Schalkskamp 134	house (c. 28 x 6.5 m) divided into two segments by (partial?) wall ditch. Double entrances into both segments. Both segments have a two-aisled and a three aisled section	ERP	Wesselingh 2000
Oss-Ussen 72A/72B	house (24 x 9,1 m) extended to house of >35,7 m, with new segment with opposite entrances in long sides	ERP	Wesselingh 2000
Wisch-Silvolde	house (26 x 6.5 m), divided into to parts by a wall ditch. Double entrances into both parts	EIA	Hulst 1989
Raalte-Raan	house (27 x 6.5 m), with two-aisled and three-aisled section divided by wall. Entrances into both segments	ERP	Verlinde 1997; Groenewoudt et al. 1998

Table 3.7 Double byre-houses. Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region.

signs, the farmstead would presented a rich source of information on the history of the household. It would have been immediately visible, from the repairs and additions, from the remains of abandoned secondary structures, or the lack thereof, whether it was a household at the beginning of its domestic cycle or one whose cycle was coming to a close. Moreover, the farmstead would probably show how the household fared socially, and how it had in the past. Ethnographic studies mentioned in section 3.1 indicate that domestic architecture is not just a reflection of the history of the household. It also affects the way the inhabitants define themselves as individuals and as a household group. Moreover, it may be a factor in the potential of a household to engage in social relationships with other groups. In order to be able to attract suitable marriage partners, or to entertain guests, it may have been important to inhabit a farmstead with the right kind of appearance and history. Perhaps ideas about the ideal biography of a house and social strategies lie behind the fact that some houses appear to have been abandoned before any repairs or changes were carried out, whereas others clearly underwent several major phases of renovations.

3.3.4 Depositional practices associated with the phase of habitation

In the section on the construction phase of the house a paragraph was dedicated to foundation deposits (3.2.4). In this section several forms of deposits are discussed that may well belong to the phase of habitation of a farmstead, although positive evidence for such a temporal association is not always present. One type of deposit that appears to be related to the phase of house abandonment will be discussed in

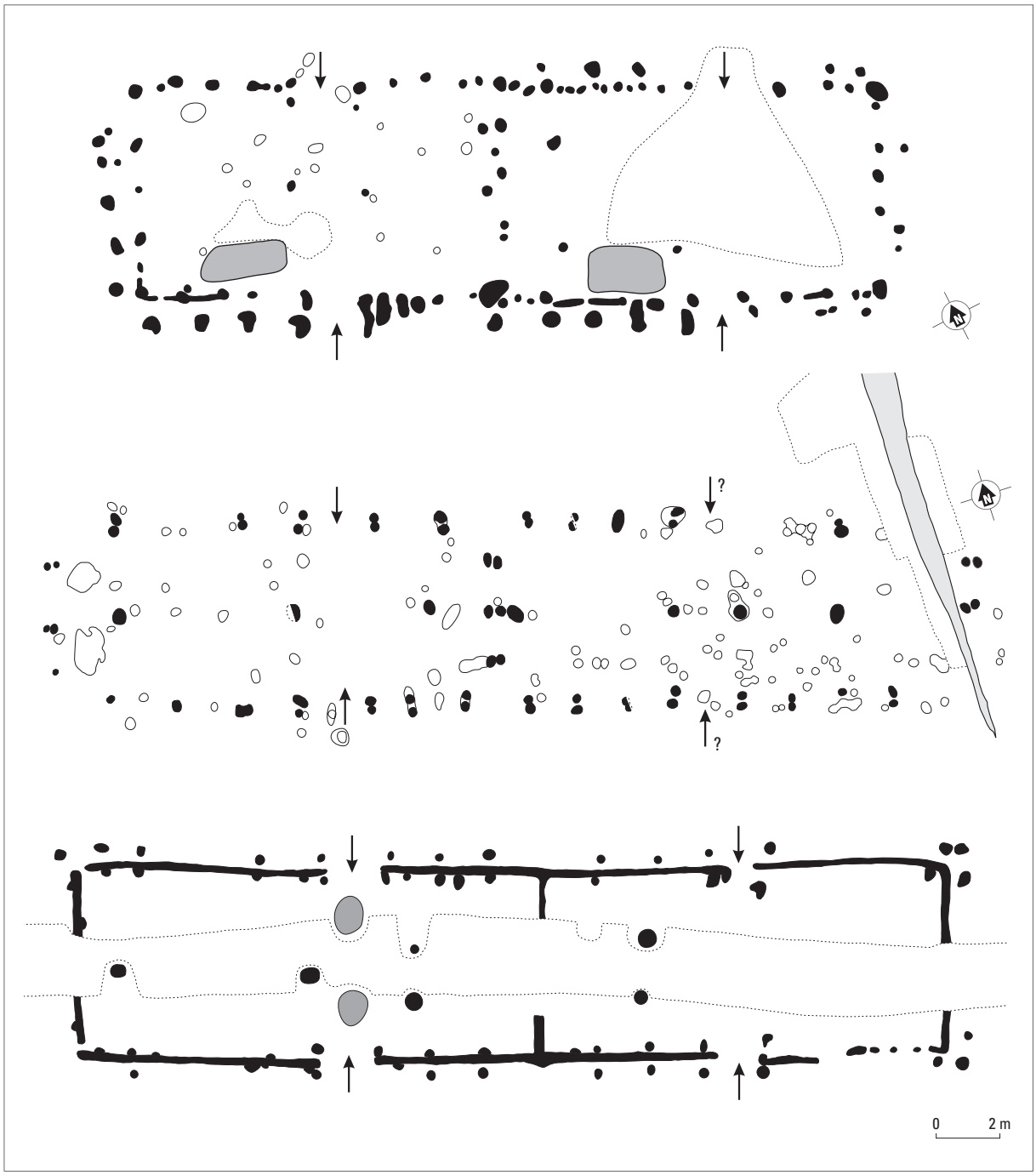

Fig. 3.27 Examples of 'double' houses. Top: Loon op Zand 3, after Roymans/Hiddink 1991a, fig. 8; middle: Oss 102, after Schinkel 1998, 251; bottom Oss-Schalkskamp 134, after Wesselingh 2000, fig. 194.

section 3.4. Depositions – practices involving the deliberate placement of cultural materials in the ground or in wet contexts – in settlement contexts have been the subject of some debate in the recent literature, a major question focusing on their social meanings and in particular on whether some depositions are to be interpreted as the remains of ritual actions. In order to clarify my own aims in discussing depositional practices I will briefly mention some of the elements of the debate.

Archaeologists have little hesitation in using the term 'ritual' when writing about the treatment of the dead, megalithic monuments or sanctuaries. Where settlements, subsistence practices or technological

aspects of ancient societies are concerned, however, 'ritual' quickly becomes a charged notion, and one that has primarily negative connotations for many. It is often seen as relating to those aspects of ancient societies that will always be beyond the reach of the interpretative powers of the archaeologist (the highest rungs of Hawkes' ladder of inference).[130] Others reject it as being a convenient but meaningless label for those phenomena that an excavator comes across but can not explain. A common attitude, therefore, has long been to treat settlement data in functionalist, rational terms, and to restrict any statements about symbolic matters to the domain of burials and cult places. But this dichotomisation disregards two important notions in anthropological thinking: that the division between sacred and profane is particular to modern western societies and cannot be assumed for the societies we study;[131] and that rituals in small-scale, illiterate societies are essential elements in the structuring of many aspects of social, religious, and economic life.[132] In other words, one cannot relegate ritual to a marginal area of life, and treat it as something separate from daily, secular practices. Depositional practices have been singled out in recent years as archaeologically accessible forms of social practice for studying rituals in settlement contexts.

A major problem, one probably underlying the hesitation of archaeologists to interpret finds as 'ritual', is posed by the difficulties of defining ritual and distinguishing it from non-ritual. A cursory reading of some of the recent anthropological literature on ritual is enough to conclude that an attempt to produce a definite, cross-culturally applicable definition is futile.[133] But there are still valuable points to be made about the nature of ritual and its relations to non-ritual activities. What distinguishes ritual from mundane practices is not the presence or absence of symbolic meaning.[134] Cultural ideas and values structure people's every action, whether they are participating in an elaborate wedding ceremony, or disposing of rubbish in a ditch. If ritual is not distinguished by its symbolic character, nor does it differ from mundane activities in that it lacks a practical purpose. A tendency in archaeological reasoning has often been to reserve the term ritual for that which does not seem to serve a practical purpose. But this misrepresents the nature of rituals in many non-western societies.[135] For an Iron Age community involved in a ritual to transform an adolescent into an adult, that ritual served a very real purpose, and had immediate effects in the social sphere. Rules as to who had the authority to perform that ritual, as well as the negotiation of those rules, similarly had very real effects in the social and political sphere.[136] Ritual, one has to presuppose, did not have the marginal, superfluous character that it has in our society. This is to stress ritual as a form of social practice rather than as purely symbolic behaviour.[137] This is not to say, however, that the practical nature will always be clear to an outsider, including the archaeologist, unfamiliar with a society's logic.

An important implication of this view of the nature of rituals – and one that complicates their archaeological recognition – is that rituals often draw on the same cognitive structures and the same types of material culture as mundane, daily activities. To quote JD Hill: *"The sorts of practices I see as ritual* […] *share much with mundane activities. Indeed it would be surprising if animal sacrifice and feasting did not share similar technologies, procedures and metaphorical links with more mundane cuisine…*"[138] In other words, rituals are not necessarily archaeologically recognisable by the involvement of 'special' artefacts or 'special' locations (where-

130 Hawkes 1954.

131 Bell 1992; cf. Brück 1999b.

132 E.g. Connerton 1989; Barraud/Platenkamp 1990; Turner 1992.

133 For recent anthropological discussions on defining and understanding ritual: Lewis 1980; Bloch 1989; Kelly/Kaplan 1990; De Coppet 1992; Bell 1992; Parkin 1992; Humphrey/Laidlaw 1994.

134 Moore 1986; Hill 1995, 96: : '*…all human activities are symbolically structured, drawing on and reproducing cultural norms and structures.*'; Brück 1999b, 325.

135 Brück 1999b.

136 Parkin 1992, 12-13, 18-19.

137 Lewis 1980, 16ff.; Bell 1992, 69-88; Turner 1992; Hill 1995, 98.

138 Hill 1995, 99.

by special can stand for prestigious, exotic, rare etc.). Animal remains, potsherds or charcoal can function in highly ritualised activities, while precious artefacts or human skeletal remains may in some instances have been treated as rubbish.

In an insightful article Joanna Brück has recently argued that it would be a mistake to follow this line of reasoning further and view ritual or ritualisation as a component of all aspects of daily life.[139] In her opinion, this marginalises the practical aspects of day-to-day living and, in effect, constitutes a continued differentiation between symbolic and practical action. To resolve this problem, she suggests that it is necessary to realise that our modern understanding of rationality differs from that in other societies, and that therefore our historically-specific, cultural constructs of practical and symbolic cannot be projected onto actions in the past. Citing ethnographic accounts that suggest that non-modern societies often do not perceive a strict distinction between a sacred and a profane domain and between ritual and practical actions, Brück argues that a more important problem than the identification of prehistoric ritual concerns the nature of prehistoric rationality – the culturally specific sets of values, aims and knowledge that shaped practical interaction with the world.[140] Only with a grasp of the 'other's' logic does it become possible to ask the question whether a differentiation was made between 'special' or 'regular' practices.

In practical terms, this means that when depositional practices in settlement contexts are studied, deposits that are 'odd' and therefore perhaps the result of ritual actions cannot be looked at in isolation. The whole range of depositions needs to be incorporated because it cannot be assumed *a priori* that some are the result of dumping rubbish while others are the remains of rituals. Brück suggests the term 'site maintenance practices' for all practices taking place in and around settlements that served to ensure the well-being of the settlement and its inhabitants.[141] Depositional practices are one form of site maintenance practices.

To me, this appears to be a powerful concept for interpreting depositional practices in settlement contexts without getting trapped unduly in matters of definition and categorisation. However, I would not like to abandon the notion of ritual as a specific domain of human action altogether. In the case of Iron Age societies in the MDS region, at least one sphere of social life can be identified that was perceived as being 'ritual' – or its indigenous equivalent. These are the activities carried out at cult places. Prehistoric cult places in some cases developed into sanctuaries and temples in the Roman period (see 4.3). The associated cult – which, judging from inscriptions, was viewed as specifically ritual – was transformed and romanised, but remained in many respects an indigenous cult.[142] Given this element of continuity, it is likely that the practices that were carried out at prehistoric cult places in the same region were also viewed as ritual, or, to avoid that culturally specific term, were thought of as being in some way fundamentally different in nature than, say, weeding a field. If a category of ritual was defined in the realm of cult places, then a similar distinction may have been made among practices taking place in settlement contexts. As Hill has argued, an aspect of this distinction may have been the degree to which generative principles, metaphors, symbolic structures were drawn on and reproduced in an explicit, discursive manner.[143] Whereas symbolic meanings and underlying values and ideals remain implicit during daily, routine activities, they become much more explicit and overt during ritual practices. This brings us back to the notion that I mentioned before, that through all social practices – but especially through ritual practices – people reproduce and negotiate their place in the world, their mythical origins, and relations to ancestors, spirits and deities, in other words the ideas and values that are central to their culture.

In the case of site maintenance practices, it may not always be possible to draw a clear distinction between practices with an explicit symbolic content and those where this remains implicit, but it is

139 Brück 1999b, 324-328.

140 Brück 1999b, 327-329.

141 Brück 1999b, 334-335.

142 Derks 1998.

143 Hill 1995, 99.

worthwhile to try to make this distinction with Hill's argument in mind. For purely practical reasons, I will pre-select some forms of depositional remains, rather than incorporate all depositional practices in the analysis. This can serve as a basis for establishing a repertoire of depositional practices in settlement contexts, which in turn may inform us of the ways in which the well-being of the settlement and its inhabitants was ensured. I realise that this is not a wholly sound method to try and understand prehistoric rationales, but the great amount of groundwork that would have to be done makes a methodologically robust approach unfeasible for this study.

What are the grounds then, for labelling certain kinds of deposits as 'odd', and therefore as potentially significant? A deposit that defies explanation according to our sense of functionalist logic need not qualify, but three criteria that have also been used in the literature to identify ritual deposits may be helpful. Firstly, this is recurrent patterning of the data. When multiple deposits that are separated in space and time resemble each other with respect to contents and formations and, moreover, when this patterning is the result of deliberate action rather than of natural transformation processes, this suggests that the deposits are potentially significant.

Secondly, potentially significant deposits are those where it may be suspected that an offering was made. An element of some forms of ritualised practices is that something is offered. I realise the danger of applying this characteristic, since by definition something is left behind in any deposit. Given the remark made above that ritual may involve handling potsherds, bone or charcoal, the problem of distinguishing between rubbish and an offering immediately arises. But even so, when whole artefacts, major parts of animal carcasses, or artefacts whose symbolic meanings are clear from other contexts are found, and especially when there is evidence for careful placement in the pit or ditch or posthole, chances are that they were deposited as an offering rather than as mundane rubbish.

A third reason to be alert could be the presence of evidence for depositional activities that took place in a public context. A practice of making a small offering in private on a daily or monthly basis, for example offering some food to an ancestor, may well qualify as explicitly symbolic practice, but one could ask whether those are the kinds of rituals that are archaeologically traceable. Events that involve people from outside the directly participating individuals or households have a greater chance of producing archaeologically visible marks. Not only that, they also include the kinds of events, for example life-cycle passages, that tend to consist of or be accompanied by ritual activities.[144] A kind of deposit, in other words, that appears to have been produced in the presence of groups of people, should alert archaeologists to its possible explicitly symbolic nature.

It may be needless to say that an archaeological study of site maintenance practices is restricted to those practices that involved elements that produced archaeological data, which in the case of the MDS region means that material had to be deposited in the ground (in pits, wells, postholes or ditches) or in water (streams, marshes, lakes). Less redundant may be the reminder that two potentially important types of material culture – unburned faunal remains and uncharred plant and wood remains – are largely missing from the archaeological record of the MDS region. Excavations in the western and northern Netherlands, where waterlogged conditions have sometimes resulted in excellent preservation conditions, suggest that these formed key categories of material culture with regard to ritual and the symbolic ordering of the world.[145]

[144] Hill 1995, 97-98.

[145] See the series of publications by Van der Sanden and others on deposits from wet contexts in Drenthe (e.g., Van der Sanden 1990b; idem 1995, 1996, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b and in press; Prummel/Van der Sanden 1995; Ufkes 1997). The great cultural significance of animal and human remains is also demonstrated by excavations in the chalk landscapes of France (Bruneaux et al. 1985; Lambot/Méniel 1992; Méniel 1998) and Great Britain (Grant 1991; Cunliffe 1993; Hill 1995).

In order to identify some of the elements of a depositional repertoire of the later prehistory of the MDS region it may be useful to address the matter in several steps. I will first single out several recurring types of deposits: ceramic vessels, human burials on farmyards, charred grain and deposits in the postholes of granaries.[146] This serves to identify the types of material culture that could be involved in depositional practices and the contexts in which they occur. The context is taken here to include several things: the associated material culture, the feature in which the deposit is placed, the location of that feature in relation to other elements of the farmyard and the timing of the deposition. With this type of reasoning it is hoped to go beyond discussing the nature of individual deposits and to present, in the concluding section of this chapter (3.5), some steps towards an interpretation of the social and cultural significance of the deposits.

Deposits of vessels and pottery assemblages

A first category of deposits consists of ceramic vessels. Potsherds are by far the most common find in Iron Age settlements, but here only those vessels that were found complete or nearly complete are included. This is not because it is assumed that potsherds are by definition rubbish, but finds of whole vessels in settlement contexts are unusual; one may assume that the average life cycle of ceramic vessels ended with breakage and being discarded. When a vessel is found intact or largely so, or when it is clear from the potsherds that it was intact when deposited, there is a good chance that the pot survived because it was deposited intentionally for another purpose than dumping. An inventory of the excavation literature yielded a considerable number of whole vessels (table 3.8). This probably represents only a fraction of all complete vessels found in settlement contexts, since details of finds are not discussed customarily in preliminary excavation reports.

The most striking examples of ceramic deposits are pottery 'assemblages'. In the MDS region there are eight examples known (Bladel, Oss (two), Loon op Zand, Goirle, Bergeyk, Strijp, and Stein, while another comes from the eastern Netherlands (Kotten)).[147] Several of them are early finds, and there is little known about the vessels and find spot. A well-published assemblage from Bladel can serve as an example here (fig. 3.28). Seven pots were found together. The largest, a big storage vessel, lay on its side and contained two bowls and two medium-sized jars. Two other pots, a medium-sized bowl and a storage vessel, had been placed upside down next to the large storage vessel. The other cases resemble the find from Bladel in one or more ways. The number of pots ranges from seven to fourteen or more, and there is often mention that the pots were deposited with special care. In at least one other case smaller vessels had been placed inside larger ones: in Goirle no less than nine small vessels were found inside two large storage jars. Vessels on their side or upside down are known from several other cases (Kotten, Goirle). In one case a group of at least seven pots had been stacked on top of each other (Oss-Schalkskamp). The fact that so many vessels are found together, and the evidence for the care that was put into the positioning of the pots, rules out the possibility that the pots entered the pit accidentally.

There is another striking similarity. In most cases the assemblage consists of a range of sizes and a variety of ceramic types. Typically, there are one or two large storage vessels, several medium-sized vessels, including cooking ware and bowls, and often also one or more small cups and bowls. This suggests that the depositions were not only intentional but also the result of a recurring practice. The one case where there is no range from small to large is a find from Oss-Schalkskamp. It differs from the others in that it

[146] This analysis is based on a survey of the literature. As unpublished materials could not be taken into account it is undoubtedly an incomplete inventory of the existing data.

[147] Details of the finds and references can be found in table 3.8.

site name	find/context	date	reference
Oss-Mettegeupel	1 vessel, upside down; over pig jaw and grain in small pit	LBA	Fokkens 1993
Breda-Moskes	complete vessels in 2 pits	EIA	Van den Eynde/ Berkvens 2001
Donk	4 vessels (3 bowls, 1 pot); small pit between houses	EIA	Van Impe 1983
Kessel-Dijk	9 or more vessels (wasters: storage jars, bowls, pots); with charcoal,burnt loam, fire-cracked stones in pit	EIA	Willems 1983
Oss-Horzak	5 vessels (group); with 35 kg of potsherds, 4 spindle whorls, wooden lid in well	EIA	Jansen/Fokkens 1999
Oss-Mikkeldonk	1 vessel; pit between 2 houses	EIA	Fokkens 1991a
Oss-Ussen	5 vessels (1 single, group of 4); group in pit with unspecified domestic refuse	EIA	Schinkel 1998, 48
Ravenstein	1 vessel (open bowl); with spindle whorl, 2 loom weights, potsherds (hundreds) in pit (diam. 1,8m)	EIA	Verwers 1990
Riethoven	a) 2 or more vessels (single); in pits within house 1 b) 3 or more vessels (group of 2, single); in pits within house 2	EIA	Slofstra 1991a
Someren	5 vessels (1 single, group of 4); in 2 pits in house, group with grinding stone	EIA	Kortlang 1999
Loon op Zand	14 or more pots (group), context unknown	EIA	Verwers/Kleij 1998
Haelen	1 very large storage vessel; settlement context	EIA?	Bloemers 1975
Bladel	7 vessels (group); probably in pit, border zone wet-dry terrain	EIA/(MIA)	Roymans 1977
Neer	2 or more large storage vessels; in pit (1,4x1,2m) with 20 cm layer of potsherds (partly wasters), charcoal, loomweight	EIA/MIA	Smeets 1987
Oss-Ussen	8 vessels (group); in well	MIA	Schinkel 1998, 86
Oss-Ussen	18 vessels (all single); in deep pits	MIA	Schinkel 1998, 86
Oss-Schalkskamp	7 or more vessels, secondarily burnt (group); stacked in narrow pit	MIA	Fokkens 1991c
Haps	5 vessels (at least one complete), secondarily burnt; with 70 sling bullets in small pit in house C	MIA/LIA	Verwers 1972
Kontich-Alfsberg	1 vessel upside down; in depression	MIA/LIA	Annaert 1993
Oss-Ussen	3 vessels (all single); in pits	LIA	Schinkel 1998, 130
Bergeijk	12 or more vessels (group); context unknown	IA	Roymans 1977
Goirle	14 vessels (group); context unknown	IA	Roymans 1977
Strijp	2 large, several small vessels (group); context unknown	IA	Roymans 1977
Maastricht	14 vessels (12 wasters: storage jars, pots, small bowls); in pit, on burnt loam, covered by crushed grinding stones	EIA	Dijkman 1989
Nijmegen-Lent	1 large storage jar; with loom weight, broken grinding stone, bronze ring, fragment of flint sickle in rectangular pit	EIA	Van den Broeke 1999
Kotten	8 vessels (group); with mortar and grinding stone in pit, border zone wet-dry terrain	EIA	Bursch 1927
Stein	10 vessels (group); with fragments of at least 9 other vessels, spindle whorl, Middle Neolithic (?) jadeite axe, context unknown	MIA	Hendrix/Schaap 1995
Druten-Scharenburg	9 or more vessels (group, all secondarily burnt); in pit lying over uncharred (?) bone fragments	MIA/LIA (3rd c. BC)	Tuijn/Vissers 2000

Table 3.8 Deposits of pottery groups and single whole vessels, sorted by date. Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region.

consists of a group of at least seven medium-sized pots, all of which were secondarily exposed to and damaged by fire.

More numerous than pottery assemblages are deposits of single whole pots or small groups of two or three whole pots (table 3.8). Bowls and small to medium-sized jars occur more frequently than large storage vessels. There is considerable variation in deposition contexts: single vessels or small groups of vessels occur in pits (including wells, pits with unknown function and pits whose size and shape suggest that they may have been dug for the purpose of deposition), in postholes, and in ditches. Some pots occur in

otherwise clean fills, others in combination with other objects, such as spindle whorls and grinding stone fragments. Others still are associated with what appears to be domestic refuse.

Several aspects need to be considered when trying to understand the nature of these deposits. First, there are no indications that the ceramics were anything other than regular pots, used for storage, cooking and serving. Only in one or two cases does it seem that vessels were selected because of their fine ware or decoration, but even then it is unlikely that the pottery was manufactured for a special, non-domestic purpose. Secondly, there is little information on the possible contents of the pottery at the time of deposition. Some of the pots may have contained organic material, and the pottery itself may not have been the significant element in the deposit. But in the case of the pottery groups, there are indications that it was actually the pottery itself that was significant in the deposition. This is suggested by the fact that pots are often found inside larger pots, and that other pots were placed in such a way – with their mouth facing down or to the side – that they could not have contained food or liquids at the time of deposition. One of the pots in the pottery assemblage from Stein contained a spindle whorl and a Middle-Neolithic jadeite axe, which also suggests that the pot could not have been filled with foodstuffs at the time of deposition.

One explanation that has been suggested for the pottery assemblages in pits is that they represent storage or cooling facilities, and that their owners for some reason left the vessels behind.[148] One problem with this explanation has just been mentioned: the pottery contains other items or is positioned in such a way, that – at least at the time of final deposition – it could not have been meant for storing foodstuffs that were to be collected at a later point in time. In other words, whatever their original function in the pit, it seems that the pots ultimately were placed in the ground with the purpose of leaving them there.

In the case of single vessels one has to consider seriously the options of discard or accidental loss, especially when they are found together with domestic refuse. But there are cases of single vessels and small groups of pots where such explanations are unlikely. In Oss-Mettegeupel, an Early Iron Age pot was found in a small pit, turned on its head, and covering the remains of a pig jaw and some grain seeds. Accidental loss is also unlikely in a case from Donk, where a small Early Iron Age pit that was found between two buildings contained three bowls and a jar.

Are there diachronic patterns in the deposition of pottery? Table 3.8 lists 17 cases of pottery depositions that date to the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, and 23 that post-date the Early Iron Age. This is somewhat remarkable because the number of excavated Urnfield period farmsteads is far lower than that of the later periods, and one could expect - if the practices behind pottery depositions remained the same - that the number of cases would rise in the later periods. The slight increase in the number of cases is not proportional to the rise in the number of known farmsteads. Most of the Middle and all of the Late Iron Age deposits, moreover, consist of single vessels, often found together with other settlement material.

Human burials in farmyards

Even though human burials are not commonly found in excavations of prehistoric settlement complexes, there is reason to believe that there were periods when the option of burying all, or part of, a dead person on or near a farmstead was regularly chosen. Burials tend to be seen by archaeologists as a fundamentally different type of deposit than other deposits in settlements.[149] But there is no good reason to exclude them here; this would presume *a priori* that the same distinction was made in antiquity.

[148] Van den Broeke 1987b, 103.

[149] In British Iron Age studies (especially for Wessex), for example, the human skeletal remains encountered in pits within settlements have long been treated as a different class of data than the 'refuse' which accompanied the human remains (Cunliffe 1983; Walker 1984; Wait 1985; cf. Hill 1995, 11-13). Only in recent research have all categories of material been analysed together (Hill 1995).

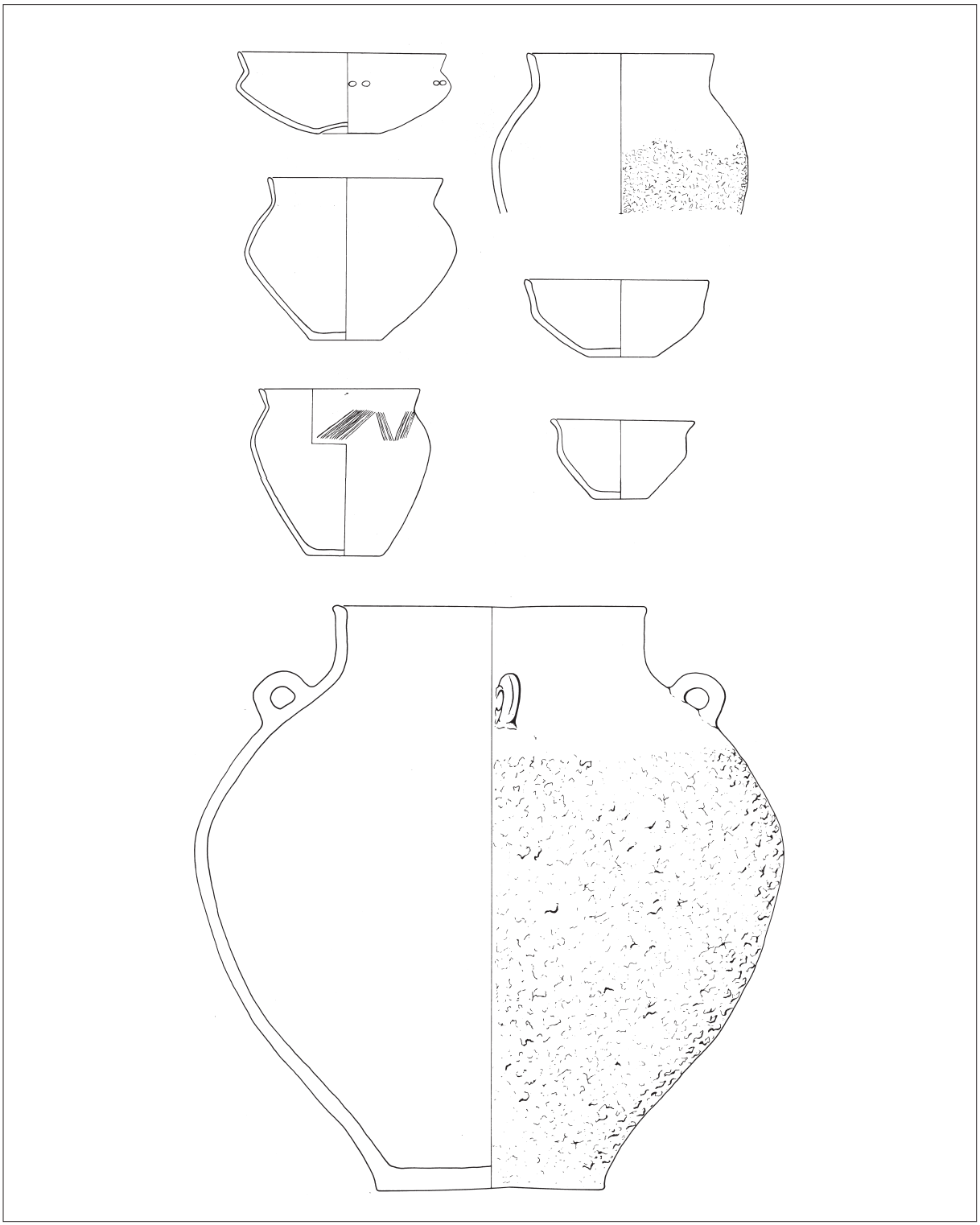

Fig. 3.28 Bladel. Pottery assemblage found in pit (Early Iron Age or beginning of Middle Iron Age). After Roymans 1977, fig. 3. Scale 1:8.

In excavation reports, one occasionally finds a short note on one or two small pits containing some cremated human bone, or an isolated ring ditch (table 3.9). In Nijmegen-Kops Plateau, for example, ten cremation burials were found in an area with settlement traces from the Middle Iron Age, some in small clusters, some isolated.[150] Only one grave was marked by a ring ditch. Five of the graves contained iron spearheads or arrowheads of types dating to the late Early Iron Age or the beginning of the Middle Iron Age.[151] Recent excavations at Weert-Klein Leuken exposed a farmstead with three, probably consecutive, farmhouses (fig. 3.29). Artefacts from the houses, as well as surface finds (including glass La Tène bracelets and a gold coin from the first half of the 1st century BC), date the farmstead to the Late Iron Age.[152] Three cremation burials, in small pits without a peripheral ditch, were found in the direct vicinity of the houses.

It seems reasonable to assume that there is at least general contemporaneity between the graves and the nearby houses. Datable grave goods at other sites, although unfortunately not always in large-scale excavations, include glass La Tène bracelets at Grubbenvorst and Neerharen-Rekem, fragments of a bent sword at Grubbenvorst,[153] and La Tène pottery at Kesteren. In other cases, the assumption of an association between farmsteads and graves is largely based on spatial proximity. This carries of course a risk, but when the graves are clearly isolated from an earlier or later cemetery, and when the settlement traces are restricted to a certain period, the spatial proximity of burial and farmstead suggests temporal proximity as well. This is the case at Someren, Weert, Breda, Oss, and Wijk bij Duurstede, and possibly Ravenstein.

The earliest examples of burials on farmsteads (although not dated with certainty) belong to the Early Iron Age.[154] An earlier period in which this practice occurred may have been the Middle Bronze Age, but so far there is no evidence for it from the Late Bronze Age.[155] During the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, there was a clear trend of burying most members of the local community in communal cemeteries (see chapter 4.2), but this practice was abolished during the 5th and early 4th century BC. After that, graves tend to occur in a more dispersed pattern. There is a greater variation in burial rituals and especially in the location of burials. There appears to be an increase at that time in the number of sites where graves have been found in association with contemporary settlement traces, and it is likely that the practice of burying dead relatives in the vicinity of a farmstead gained in strength. At the end of the Late Iron Age and during the Roman period there was a new phase of communal cemeteries, but examples from Wijk bij Duurstede and other sites outside the MDS region suggest that at least in the 1st century AD, the practice of burials on or near farmyards did not disappear immediately.

An interesting question concerns the relationship of the buried people and the nearby farmsteads. The graves conform to the regular burial customs of the Iron Age; they are cremation burials, sometimes in urns but more often without a ceramic container, and either with or without a round or square ditch surrounding a low mound. In this they differ from 'irregular', uncremated human remains regularly found in association with Roman period farmyards in areas where conditions are favourable for bone preservation.[156] The lack of care spent on the deposition of the body, the incompleteness of many bodies, and

[150] The settlement traces in this part of the site have not been published in detail, but they are reported to include houses of the Haps type (Fontijn 1995). Fontijn/Cuijpers 1999, 35-36, fig. 2.

[151] Fontijn 1995, 55-58.

[152] Tol 1998b, 31-33, fig. 2.19; Roymans 1998b.

[153] The report does not make it fully clear whether the sword was actually found in a burial pit.

[154] To the list of possible Early Iron Age burials can be added four isolated cremation burials without urns from St.-Gillis-Waas in East Flanders (Bourgeois/Hagemann 1998, 92). Another possible date for these graves is the Roman period, given the vicinity of Early Iron Age as well as Roman settlement traces in the vicinity.

[155] For the relationship between barrows and farmsteads in the Middle Bronze Age see section 4.2.5 and 4.6.1; also Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 50-52; Kolen in prep.

[156] Hessing has listed the examples found in the Netherlands (1993).

site name	find/context	date	reference
Riethoven	2 cremation burials in urns, no grave structure; isolated between EIA and RP settlement traces	EIA or RP	unpublished; J. Slofstra pers. comm.
Neerharen-Rekem	a) 5 isolated cremation burials; not part of urnfield; b) 8 cremation burials, fragments of bronze pin and fibula, glass bracelet; among LIA settlement traces	a) EIA/MIA b) LIA	De Boe 1986
Oss-Mettegeupel	1 square ditch, close to MIA house	MIA	Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 73
Ravenstein	cremation burials; between Iron Age settlement traces	MIA	Verwers 1990b
Someren	3 dispersed cremation burials (1 adult?, 1 20-40 y. old female, 1 20-44 y. old); 2 near MIA/LIA house, 1 isolated?	MIA/LIA	Kortlang 1999
Oss-Kraaijenest	a) group of 5 ditched grave structures (2 circular, 3 square), burials not preserved; next to granary and 2-aisled barn; b) circular ditch (16 m diam.) with interruptions; among settlement traces	a) MIA/LIA b) LIA/RP	Fokkens 1993
Breda-Emerakker	a) 3 circular, 1 square ditched grave structure with openings in southeast; c. 15 metres from IA house; b) square ditched grave structure; c. 15 metres from LIA house	LIA?	Van Hoof/Digby/ Van den Eynde 1997
Weert	3 burials in urns; dispersed over farmyard with three LIA houses	LIA	Tol 1998b
Grubbenvorst-Groot Boller	4 cremation burials, 1 in urn, glass bracelet, fragment bent sword; between and near settlement traces	LIA	Stoepker 1990a
Oss-Schalkskamp	1 ring ditch; near LIA house, on farmyard with ditched boundary	LIA	Fokkens 1991b
Grubbenvorst-Veegteschhof	group of 5 cremation burials; in vicinity of settlement	LIA/RP	Willems 1983
Nijmegen-Lent	a) 2 or more cremation burials; b) 4 inhumation burials; a) and b) between EIA granaries and pits	a) EIA b) MIA	Van den Broeke 1999
Sint-Gillis-Waas	4 or more isolated cremation burials, among settlement traces of EIA and ERP date	EIA or ERP	Bourgeois/Hageman 1998
Nijmegen-Kops Plateau	10 cremation burials (1 with peripheral ditch); between settlement traces with Haps type houses	MIA	Fontijn/Cuijpers 1999
Kesteren	burial in urn (bowl), near refuse pit and other settlement traces	MIA/LIA	Hulst 1971
Wijk bij Duurstede-De Geer	6 grave structures (circular, square, horseshoe-shaped); among LIA settlement traces	LIA	Van Es 1994b
Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden	c. 15 cremation burials without peripheral ditch; 7 square, 2 circular structures; on and nearby farmyards	50BC-50AD	Van Es 1994a

Table 3.9 Sites with human burials in and near farmyards. Also included are square and circular peripheral ditches where the interment may have been destroyed. Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region.

the fact that they were not cremated according to the predominant custom all suggest that those 'irregular' burials should not be interpreted in the same way as the Iron Age cremation burials referred to here. Are these children that were not eligible for burial in formal burial grounds, or individuals that were buried in their own yard at the end of a long life? Or are these small family cemeteries used during the phase of habitation, containing the graves of deceased inhabitants? The three graves at Someren are the only ones for which there is information on sex and age: one possible adult, one 20-40 year old female and one 20-44 year old person of indeterminate sex.[157] This hardly constitutes a basis for interpretation, but in view of the customary treatment that they received it is likely that these were either people that inhabited the nearby farmsteads or that were related to their inhabitants.

[157] Kortlang 1999, appendix 2 (graves 16, 17, 185).

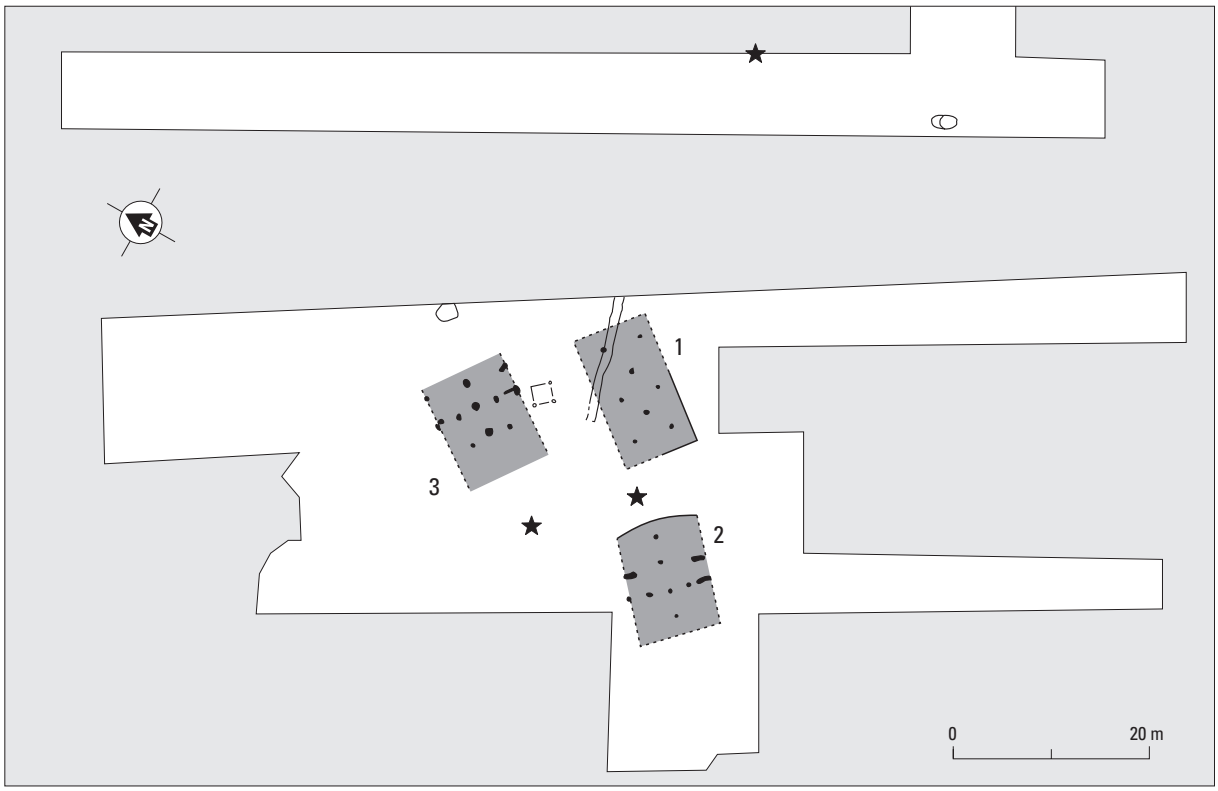

Fig. 3.29 Weert-Klein Leuken. Late Iron Age farmstead with three farmhouses, presumably representing consecutive phases of occupation. Three cremation graves (stars) were found in and near the farmstead. After Tol 1998b, fig. 2.19.

Charred grain deposits

A third category that can be considered is that of charred plant foods, in particular grain. Charred grain deposits are a well-known feature from the MDS region (table 3.10) as well as other parts of the Northwest European Plain. Typically, a plant food deposit consists of a 10 to 35 cm thick layer of concentrated charred seeds on the bottom of a pit. Rarely, the concentration occurs higher up in the fill. Regularly, but certainly not in all cases, the bottom and sides of the pit are coloured red from exposure to fire, and this can be taken as a good indication that the charring took place inside the pit itself. Some of the pits have been interpreted as grain silos, judging from their shape (see 3.3.2 on grain storage), although there are other cases where the large size and mouth of the pit is ill-suited for loose-grain storage. Some of the pits occur within the ground plan of a house (for example at Riethoven, see fig. 3.31), or under a four-post structure (at Colmschate), but more frequent is a location in a farmyard.

The most common contents of the deposits are cereals, a minority consists of acorns and in one case lentils were present among the cereals. Different kinds of cereal types occur, barley and emmer being the most common, followed by millet and oats. There are grain deposits that consist predominantly or exclusively of one species, and there are mixed deposits, with emmer and barley, or emmer, barley and millet.[158] It appears, but the literature is not always clear in this respect, that the grain deposits consisted mainly of cereals that had been partially or completely prepared for consumption. Even though the deposits consist mostly of pure seeds, there are some examples containing other finds: sometimes charcoal or potsherds, in rare cases a miniature vessel and a granite grinding stone, a spindle whorl and a iron spearhead, and a bronze chisel (see table 3.10).

[158] Cf. Roymans 1990, 103-108.

site name	find/context	date	reference
Boxmeer	a) charred grain (70% emmer/spelt, 30% barley) concentration; also bronze chisel and pottery in pit b) 2 pits in interior house 3 with concentration of charred grain (barley, emmer); no traces of charring in pit	MBA	Van Beurden 1998; Van Beurden 2000
Loon op Zand	15 cm thick layer of charred grain (50% barley, 50% emmer); on bottom beehive-like pit, bottom pit burnt	LBA	Roymans/Hiddink 1991
Oss-Horzak	concentration of charred grain; on bottom well, with higher up large numbers of potsherds (see Table 3.14)	EIA	Jansen/Fokkens 1999
Riethoven	several concentrations of charred grain (barley, emmer, millet); in pit next to house 2	EIA	Vanderhoeven 1991
Webbekom	large quantity of charred grain; in pit, with potsherds, between settlement traces	EIA/(MIA)	Van Impe 1982
Neerlanden	a) 5 cm thick layer of charred grain; on bottom of cylindrical pit; also fragments of 2 stone bracelets, many potsherds b) 2 separate layers of charred grain, clean sand in between; on bottom of elongated pit, under layer with many potsherds and layer of burnt loam	EIA/MIA	Opsteyn et al. 1999
Donk	charred millet concentration (100%)	MIA	Vanderhoeven 1988
Hilvarenbeek	charred grain concentration between potsherds (emmer and barley); in pit in settlement context	MIA	Bakels in Verwers 1975
Neerharen-Rekem	a) compact layer of charred grain (85% emmer, also oats and barley); on bottom of cylindrical pit with burnt sides and bottom; b) compact layer of charred grain (50% barley, 50% emmer); on bottom of cylindrical pit, under layer of potsherds; no traces of burning in pit	MIA	Roymans 1985
Haagsittard	charred grain concentration (chess: *bromus secalinus*; spelt, lentils); on bottom of pit with burnt sides and bottom	MIA/LIA	Stoepker 1991a
Someren	concentrations of charred grain; in postholes granaries	MIA/LIA	Kortlang 1998
Oirlo	compact layer of charred grain (60% emmer, 40% barley); on bottom cylindrical pit with burnt bottom and sides	LIA	Roymans/Hiddink 1991b
Oss-Schalkskamp	concentrations of charred grain; in postholes granary	LIA	Fokkens 1991c
Oss-Ussen	concentration of charred acorns; in small pit (P 52) near MIA house	IA	Bakels 1998
Colmschate	8 silos with layer of charred grain (emmer, barley, millet, some chaff) on bottom (8 to 25 cm thick); 2 silos situated within plan of six-poster, both with burnt sides and bottom, 1 of these contains (apart from grain) 7 or more pots (complete or mostly complete, secondarily burnt), spindle whorl, iron spearhead; the other contains (apart from grain) miniature vessel and complete grinding stone; third silo also contains large amount of (restorable) pottery	EIA	Buurman 1986
Geleen-Krawinkel	10 cm thick layer of charred barley (100%); on bottom beehive-shaped pit, between settlement traces	EIA/MIA	Abbink/Van Ieperen 1988
Maastricht	concentration of charred acorns and grain; in oval pit with burnt bottom; also two layer of charcoal in pit	EIA/MIA	Knippels 1991

Table 3.10 Sites with charred seed deposits in silos, wells and postholes. Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region.

An often-heard explanation for the presence of charred grain in pits with a burnt floor and sides is that the inside of the pit and its contents were burned in order to clear the pit of noxious germs and vermin.[159] This would ensure that the pit could be used again for loose-grain storage. Apart from the question whether this was a more efficient procedure than simply digging a new pit, there are some prob-

[159] Reynolds 1974, 128; idem 1979, 57; Monk/Fasham 1980, 334; Roymans 1985b; Buurman 1986; Groenewoudt/Verlinde 1989;Vanderhoeven 1991.

lems with this explanation. First, there are no indications that the grain that was left behind was no longer suitable for consumption; for the grain deposits in Colmschate, Buurman mentions that the grain had not germinated.[160] Why then were the contents of the pit not taken out before the burning took place? Second, why is it that the pits were only partially prepared for a new phase of use? It is unlikely that the pit was used again with an old layer of charred grain still at the bottom. After the burning, the contents and the pit were for some reason left behind. To my knowledge, there are no examples of pits that show traces of burning but that do not contain charred grain, and it is strange to suppose that we only find instances of pits that were partially prepared for a new grain store and then abandoned. This suggests, in other words, that the grain was perhaps not meant to be taken out. Either it was burned by accident and then left behind, or it was burned for a particular purpose.

If the hypothesis of sterilising the pit does not satisfactorily explain the seed deposits that were burned and abandoned *in situ*, it certainly does not account for those cases where the grain was charred somewhere else and then deposited in a silo. Here we could be dealing with grain that was accidentally charred elsewhere, e.g., during roasting activities, and then dumped into a disused silo. Alternatively, the burning and the following deposition may have been done as part of a specific depositional practice.

There are no solid arguments to reject the possibility of accidental burning, but the consistent pattern of layers of almost pure cereals suggests that – even if the burning was accidental – the ensuing treatment of the charred grain was different from other rubbish. 'Normal' refuse in pits is generally characterised by its mixed nature. Potsherds, fragmentary objects, stones or burnt loam usually occur together, whereas here the burned grain is not mixed with other materials.[161] Or, when it is, the grain deposit sometimes occurs together with rare objects, such as a bronze chisel and iron spearhead. We are justified therefore in considering the possibility that the grain deposits represent the remains of specific depositional practices involving the consumption by fire of sometimes considerable quantities of cereals. Either this took place in the silo in which the grain had been stored, or the grain was charred elsewhere and then deposited in a pit.

Artefact deposits in postholes of four/six posters and outbuildings

Instead of studying depositional practices by looking at specific categories of material culture, one can also look for patterning in the context of deposits. One case in point is the regular occurrence of considerable quantities of artefacts in the postholes of granaries and small buildings. There are a number of these from the MDS region and surrounding areas (table 3.11).[162] One group of these consists of largely complete ceramic vessels. In one case, at Echt, there were as many as four fire-damaged vessels in the corner posthole of a two-aisled structure. In another case the vessel stood on a flat stone (Lattrop). It can thus be safely ruled out that these vessels entered the postholes accidentally. The placement of vessels in the posthole core indicates (although this cannot always be determined) that they were placed in the posthole after the post itself had been removed. This means that we cannot be dealing with a foundation deposit or with pottery placed in the posthole as a support for the post. Rather, we need to think of a depositional practice accompanying the demolition of the structure.

A second group includes cases in which one or more postholes of secondary structures are filled with large numbers of potsherds. In Nijmegen-Lent the fill of a single posthole consisted of more than eleven kilograms of secondarily burnt pottery, while a similar deposit in Oss-Mettegeupel contained four kilograms of pottery and four and a half kilograms of burnt loam. Again, the use of fire appears to have been

[160] Buurman 1986.

[161] This is not to say that charred plants were always treated differently; there are numerous examples of charred grain occurring in low densities as an admixture to regular domestic rubbish.

[162] See also Van den Broeke 2002b for a similar study.

site name	find		date reference
Echt	4 vessels (1 sintered, 1 waster); in corner posthole of two-aisled structure (4,3x9m)	EIA	Willems 1983
Breda-Moskes	pot (largely complete); in posthole of seven/eight-post structure	EIA	Van den Eynde/ Berkvens 2001
Oss-Almstein	potsherds (309 sherds, 4 kg), 4,5 kg burnt loam; in postholes of 12-poster, in isolated group with 2 other outbuildings	EIA/MIA	Van der Beek 1996
Haps	potsherds ('considerable quantities'); in several postholes of four-posters	MIA/LIA	Verwers 1972, 94
Oss-Zaltbommelseweg	pottery (122 sherds, 11 kg, many secondarily burnt), loom weight, burnt bone, fragments grinding stones; in 2 postholes of four-poster	LIA	Van der Sanden 1990
Nijmegen-Lent	potsherds (16 kg, largely secondarily burnt, mostly large storage vessels); in 2 postholes of eight-poster	EIA	Van den Broeke 1999; idem 2002b
Geleen-Janskamperveld	large vessel with ear (incomplete); posthole two-aisled structure	EIA	Louwe Kooijmans et al. 1992
Denekamp-Lattrop	90 potsherds of large storage vessel, secondarily burnt; in posthole of four-poster	IA	Verlinde 1997

Table 3.11 Sites with deposits in postholes of four/six-posters and outbuildings. Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region.

a recurring aspect of the activities preceding the deposit, as there are reports of high percentages of burnt material from Nijmegen, Oss-Mettegeupel, Oss-Zaltbommelseweg and Lattrop. Given the pattern that is emerging in the data, it seems reasonable to assume a practice behind the deposits, rather than random events. Another indication that these are not regular refuse dumps comes from the observation that in Oss-Mettegeupel and in Lattrop the structures were situated somewhat isolated from farmsteads.[163] This makes it unlikely that large amounts of pottery and burnt loam happened to be lying nearby when the structures were demolished.

Apart from the categories discussed so far, there is a diffuse group of deposits for which it can be assumed that they represent material that had been intentionally placed in a pit, posthole or ditch (table 3.12). This is based on the fact that it is a complete object, or a group of objects occurring in association with each other in a way that does not appear accidental. The group is diffuse, because many of the deposits are unique or very rare at present. For example, what is the background of a small Late Iron Age pit in the vicinity of contemporary houses which contained one iron axe?[164] Is this settlement rubbish that accidentally ended up in the pit? It seems unlikely, since we do not usually think of metal artefacts as rubbish when they are not clearly worn out or broken. An intentional deposition seems more likely, but there are no other examples known from the Late Iron Age that could indicate how this find relates to a specific depositional practice. To find parallels one may have to go back as far as the Late Bronze Age, when a single axe was placed under a cobble passage from a MBA stone circle to a Late Bronze Age cult place.[165] Alternatively, one may have to compare the find to a deposit of three iron artefacts, including a chisel and a leather-working knife, inside a small pit in the annex of a Late Iron Age house at Beegden (fig. 3.30).[166]

[163] The nearest contemporary settlement traces in Lattrop are located 200 m away; in Oss-Mettegeupel this distance is unknown.

[164] Found at Oss-Schalkskamp (Fokkens 1991b, 129).

[165] Fontijn 2002; Fontijn/Cuijpers 1999.

[166] Roymans 1988.

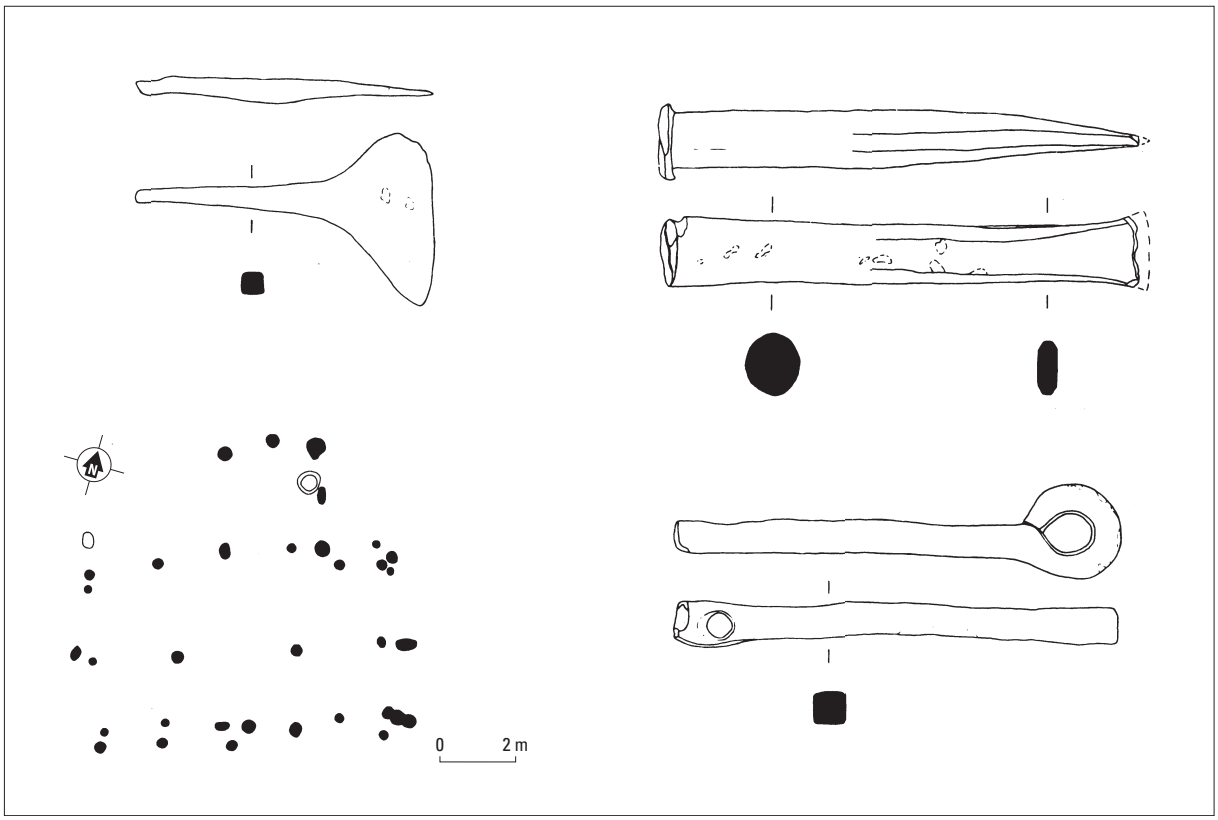

Fig. 3.30 Beegden. Cache of iron tools (scale 1:3) from small pit in annex of Late Iron Age house. After Roymans 1988, fig. 8 and 9.

site name	find/context	date	reference
Boxmeer	bronze chisel in silo with charred grain deposit	MBA	Van der Velde 1998
Haps	cache of 70 sling bullets together with 5 secondarily burnt pots (1 complete); in pit inside plan of house C	MIA	Verwers 1972
Beegden	cache of iron chisel, knife and indet. object; in small pit in annex of LIA house	LIA	Roymans 1988
Oss-Schalkskamp	cache of 210 sling bullets; in ditch around settlement	LIA	Fokkens 1992, 160
Oss-Schalkskamp	iron axe in small pit	LIA/RP	Fokkens 1991a, 129
Nijmegen-Lent	rectangular pit with halfway in the fill a paving of large sherds; under it a hammer/axe of antler, which may originally have stood upright in the pit	EIA (7th c.)	Van den Broeke 1999
Colmschate-Swormink	4 loom weights, placed in pairs on top of each other, covered by large rim sherd; in 50 cm deep pit	EIA	Ten Bosch et al. 1997
Wierden-Enter	large number of potsherds (predominantly wasters), fragments of 8 pyramidal loom weights; in silo (not in oven pit), in border zone of settlement?	RP?	Verlinde et al. 1998
Bathmen	dump of wasters; in pit in border zone of settlement	IA	Verlinde et al. 1998

Table 3.12 Other 'odd' deposits in pits and ditches in domestic contexts. Lower part of table lists examples from other regions.

	MBA	LBA	EIA/early MIA	MIA/LIA	late LIA/ERP
foundation deposits	-	-	-	+	++
ceramic groups	-	-	++	-	-
single vessels	-	+	++	++	+
grain deposits	+	+	++	++	+
human burials	-	-	+	++	++
abandonment deposit granary	-	-	++	-	-
abandonment deposit house	-	-	++	+	-

Table 3.13 Overview of relative frequency of deposits per period (- : absent; + present; ++ fairly frequent).

Table 3.13 summarises some of the diachronic variability in the deposits encountered in the MDS region. It includes a category, house abandonment deposits, that will be discussed in the following section. From the table it appears that the Early Iron Age and the beginning of the Middle Iron Age were periods with a greater intensity and variation in depositional practices than other periods. This may be the case, and the fact that fewer Early Iron Age farmsteads are known than Late Iron Age and Early Roman period ones could be taken to indicate that the deposits of the earlier period are probably underrepresented, further supporting the argument. But some caution is necessary before the frequencies of the deposits are interpreted in terms of depositional practices. This is partly because the information in the table is based primarily on a study of the published literature, not on an in-depth analysis of the excavated materials. This does not contribute to completeness and chronological reliability. More importantly, it is based on a selection that was biased towards the 'odd' and 'eye-catching' deposits. As was explained at the beginning of this section, a study of depositional practices in settlement contexts should take into account all deposits, also the ones that may appear to our modern eyes to be no more than trash deposits.

3.4 ABANDONING THE HOUSE

3.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The process of house abandonment is not often touched upon in the Dutch archaeological literature.[167] It goes without saying that the houses that archaeologists excavate were abandoned, so there seems little point in dwelling on the fact. If any reasons are mentioned, it is usually along the lines of the house having fallen into disrepair, the surrounding fields having been depleted, or, rarely, the devastating effects of a fire. It would seem that there is more to be said about the cultural aspects of house abandonment. First, however, it is necessary to specify what is meant here by the term abandonment. Abandonment is a relative notion, and does not necessarily imply that people completely ceased their activities at a location. House abandonment means that a house is given up for habitation, but people may continue to live in the same farmyard, and may use the abandoned house for secondary purposes: storage, keeping animals, or as an ancestral house. If the farmstead continues to be inhabited, one can speak of house replacement and farmstead continuity. Farmstead abandonment is more drastic and means that the site is given up for habitation. But even then activities may have continued there, involving the abandoned structures or constituting a new phase of use as fields, gardens or as a cemetery. Moreover, one could argue that a location where no human

[167] For an exception: Therkorn 1987a, 216-217; idem 1987b. Nor is the international literature extensive, cf. Cameron/Tomka 1993.

activities take place is not truly abandoned as long as the place is remembered as a locality once inhabited, as a place associated with the ancestors, as a place to return to in the future, or one that should be avoided.[168] According to this definition, house and farmstead abandonment does not need to imply more than an end of a habitation phase, and a change in the nature and intensity of the use of the location.

This should not be taken to suggest, however, that the abandonment of a house or farmstead is not a culturally and socially significant moment. Given the links with the household's domestic cycle that were stressed throughout this chapter (fig. 3.1), it may be expected that the abandonment has implications for the social composition of the local community. The life cycle of the household which began with the construction of the house comes to an end with its abandonment; the house, in its social and physical sense ceases to exist.

Based on ethnographic literature two 'strategies' can be distinguished in the treatment of domestic architecture after the death of the household head and the end of the domestic cycle. An example of the first kind was given in the introduction to this chapter. Among the Zafimaniry of Madagascar, the house of particular conjugal couples is kept in repair after their death; it is even further beautified and decorated.[169] The house remains standing as a focal point for the descendants, where they come together to receive ancestral blessings and to reconfirm kinship ties. This striving for durability is in complete contrast with the practices that follow a person's death among groups in northern New Ireland.[170] In several ceremonies that are spread out over a number of years, all traces that the person left in the landscape are eradicated. In the first year or two, the produce of the deceased person's gardens is consumed, and the gardens are left to develop into secondary forest. The person's house is burnt down and the site is prepared for a much larger ceremony by building cooking huts there. After another two years or so, when the body in its grave is thought to have decomposed completely, a ceremony is carried out that involves a procession from the person's gardens to his or her former house site, while on the way all remaining fruit and palm trees planted by that person are cut down. Several years later, the final ceremonies take place, whereby a *Malangan* sculpture is carved from wood or made of cloth and wool. It is thought to contain the life force of the deceased and is erected on the grave. The following day, directly after the sculpture is unveiled and displayed, the sculpture is 'killed' through a series of ceremonial exchanges. The deceased person's life force is thus channelled back to the living. Finally, the sculpture is carried into the forest and left to decompose there.

In this New Ireland case it is through deliberately created transience rather than through durability that the deceased is transformed into an ancestor, and this has clear effects on the house and traces of the deceased in the landscape.[171] The two examples can be seen as two rather extreme cases on a continuum, but they serve to illustrate how the notions of transience and durability can be useful categories to study the social embeddedness of house and farmstead abandonment. Transience and durability are not mutually exclusive. It is, in fact, likely that both are in operation at the same time, but changes in the relative emphasis on durability or transience with regard to domestic architecture or any other category of material culture may point to social transformations.

3.4.2 ABANDONMENT PRACTICES

What happened in the MDS region with a house after it had been abandoned? Was the house quickly demolished, so that its posts could be reused or the terrain prepared for cultivation? Did the house remain standing as a slowly decaying ruin, or was it even kept in repair for a while? Were houses used for

168 Pryor 1995, 96-97.

169 Bloch 1995.

170 Küchler 1987; idem 1988 and 1993, 98ff.

171 Cf. Miller 1994, 413-415 for a similar use of the concept of transience.

secondary activities? In other words, did the cultural biography of houses continue after they had been abandoned, and if so, which options were acceptable, and which were never chosen?

House remains in the MDS region are unfortunately not very informative on this matter. Preservation conditions in the sandy landscape are usually such that wood is only preserved at a considerable depth, deeper than most postholes of prehistoric features. At the site of Oss, where the groundwater table is somewhat higher than at other sites, it is not uncommon for a stump of wood to be preserved at the bottom of the deepest postholes of Late Iron Age and Roman period houses.[172] This indicates that the posts were left in the ground after abandonment, and that the house was left as a decaying ruin. But the possibility has to be considered that the upper parts of the posts were removed, while no effort was made to pull out the rotten lower part. Such a situation has been encountered at Assendelft in the western Netherlands, where upright posts had been chopped off above the latest floor level of an Early Iron Age house.[173] This must have been done after the roof had been dismantled.[174]

Although charcoal and burnt loam do occur in postholes with some regularity, the quantities are rarely large enough to suggest that the house had burnt down. One can wonder, however, whether burnt material necessarily enters the postholes and thus the archaeological record. A fire would presumably not burn the parts of the posts below the ground surface because of a lack of oxygen there, so charcoal could not have been deposited in the postholes until after the posts had been removed or had disintegrated. In a case where the burnt remains of the house were levelled and the terrain cleared fairly soon after the fire, one can imagine that material was deposited in the postholes from which the stumps had been removed. But if the site was abandoned and the burnt ruin left standing, most of the charcoal may have scattered before the posts had disintegrated. So while it is not clear if a burnt-down house is always recognisable as such, in the absence of positive evidence for a practice of burning down houses I presume that this was not customary. Additional support for this comes from Iron Age houses in wetland regions in the western and northern Netherlands. Preserved construction wood and wattle walls practically never show signs of exposure to a violent fire.[175]

There are indications that the abandonment of a house was sometimes or usually accompanied by specific depositional practices. One of these is the presence of large pits on or near farmyards that are filled with striking quantities of 'domestic rubbish'. They date to the Early Iron Age and the beginning of the Middle Iron Age (table 3.14). So-called rubbish pits are a fairly common feature on Bronze Age and Iron Age sites. Usually they are assumed to be pits that had lost their original function and were conveniently filled with refuse. The pits discussed here are thought to represent practices that differ from regular rubbish disposal for several reasons: the consistency of their contents, the short duration of the filling phase of the pits, and in some cases the location of the pits in relation to farmhouses. There is a set of artefacts that occurs in all or almost all of them, consisting of large quantities of potsherds (hundreds or more), many of which have been exposed to secondary firing or were damaged during original firing (wasters), in combination with burnt loam, numerous fragments of grinding stones and fire-cracked pieces of quartzite or sandstone (cooking stones or hearth stones), charcoal, and often one or more spindle whorls and loom weights. Metal artefacts and burnt bone are rare. Finds of a wooden lid and a wooden handle suggest that organic material (especially wooden objects and unburned bone) may have been a significant but archaeologically invisible element of the deposits. Both came from a deposit that gives

[172] Schinkel 1998, 125, table 14.

[173] Therkorn et al. 1984, 363.

[174] A very different pattern is shown by the ground plans of farmhouses of the High Middle Ages in the MDS region. Postholes are frequently cut by larger pits that were dug after a house was abandoned to pull the uprights out of the ground (T. Huijbers pers. comm.).

[175] Therkorn 1987a; Van Trierum 1992.

site name	find/context	date	reference
Boxmeer	potsherds (many kilo's, all secondarily burnt, of large pots), charred botanical remains; in posthole of farmhouse	LBA	Van der Velde 1998; Van den Broeke 2002b.
Someren	10 large pits in interior double house; 3 complete bowls, 1 cup, tephrite quern placed together on floor of pit; burnt sand in fill, some with large number of potsherds, many secondarily burnt; charcoal concentrations	EIA (7th c.)	Van der Horst 1997; Kortlang 1999
Riethoven	large pits inside and next to 2 farmhouses; complete pottery in several pits (1 large storage vessel next to smaller vessel placed upside down), concentrations of charred wood and charcoal, spindle whorls, whetstone, loom weight; traces of burning in some pits; grain deposit in pit next to house 2	EIA	Slofstra 1991a; Vanderhoeven 1991; Gerritsen 1999b
Ravenstein	potsherds ('hundreds', 1 complete bowl, 40 salt containers), spindle whorl, loom weights; in pit (diam. 1,8 m x 0,6 m)	EIA (6th c.)	Verwers 1990
Kessel-Dijk	potsherds (large number, at least 9 complete pots, wasters), burnt loam, burnt stones, charcoal; in double pit (2,3 x 1 x 0,3 m and 1,4 x 1,4 x 0,9 m) with burnt sand on sides and base	EIA	Willems 1983
Oss-Horzak	2 deep pits; 1 with 35 kg of highly fragmented pottery, several complete pots (broken), spindle whorls, wooden lid, wooden handle, loom weights; 2 (pit 7 m diameter) with 1000+ potsherds, bone, wooden lid; relationship with farmhouses unclear	EIA/MIA	Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 83
Neer	potsherds ('hundreds', wasters and normal sherds), charcoal, loom weight; in pit (1,2 x 1,4 m)	EIA/MIA	Stoepker 1987; Smeets 1987
Oss-Mettegeupel	potsherds (>141 sherds, >3,3 kg; partly overheated); burnt loam (>1,8 kg); in posthole on central axis of farmhouse	late MIA/ early LIA	Van den Broeke 2002b
Colmschate	776 potsherds (rims of at least 81 pots), fragments of at least 12 loom weights, 2 spindle whorls, 3,7 kg of burnt loam, 6,8 kg stones (many fire-cracked), bronze spiral hair-ring; in large pit next to EIA farmhouse	EIA	Groenewoudt/ Verlinde 1989
Geleen	1266 potsherds, spindle whorl, iron slag, burnt loam, 7,5 kg stones (burnt); in large pit (c.7 x 4 m)	late EIA	Van den Broeke 1980b
Maastricht	a) potsherds (at least 14 complete pots, 12 wasters), burnt loam, pots covered by layer of crushed grinding stones; in circular pit (diam. 70 cm) b) 1871 potsherds, 3 spindle whorls, copper ring, 'countless' burnt loam fragments, 'countless' stones, 164 g burnt bone, charcoal; in large irregular pit	a) EIA (6th c.) b) MIA (5th c.)	Dijkman 1989
Nijmegen-Oosterhout	burnt loam (7,5 kg, belonging to hearth lining), potsherds (0,5 kg), placed on base of vessel in central posthole of farmhouse	MIA/LIA	Van den Broeke 2002b

Table 3.14 Sites with 'house abandonment' deposits in pits. Lower part of the table lists relevant parallels outside the MDS region.

some insight into the size of these deposits.[176] It also contained over 35 kilos of highly fragmented pottery, several almost complete jars, spindle whorls, loom weights and a fragment of a pierced oven floor. The deposit dates to the first half of the Middle Iron Age.

There is not a uniform shape or size of pit in which these deposits are found. They occur in pits that may originally have been used as a silo, well or perhaps oven, but also in pits of irregular shape. Apart from the consistency in the categories of artefacts present there is also a consistent pattern to the use of fire. All examples contain objects that were damaged or destroyed by fire. In one case the fire appears to have burned in the pit itself (Kessel), while in other cases the material appears to have been exposed to fire somewhere else and then to have been deposited in the pit. It is clear that the majority of the material was dumped into the pit in one single event, because there are (as far as the reports are clear on this) no layers of clean fill or wash between deposits that could be interpreted as periods of inactivity. In one case (Colmschate) there are sherds of one pot that were found in separate layers of the deposit.

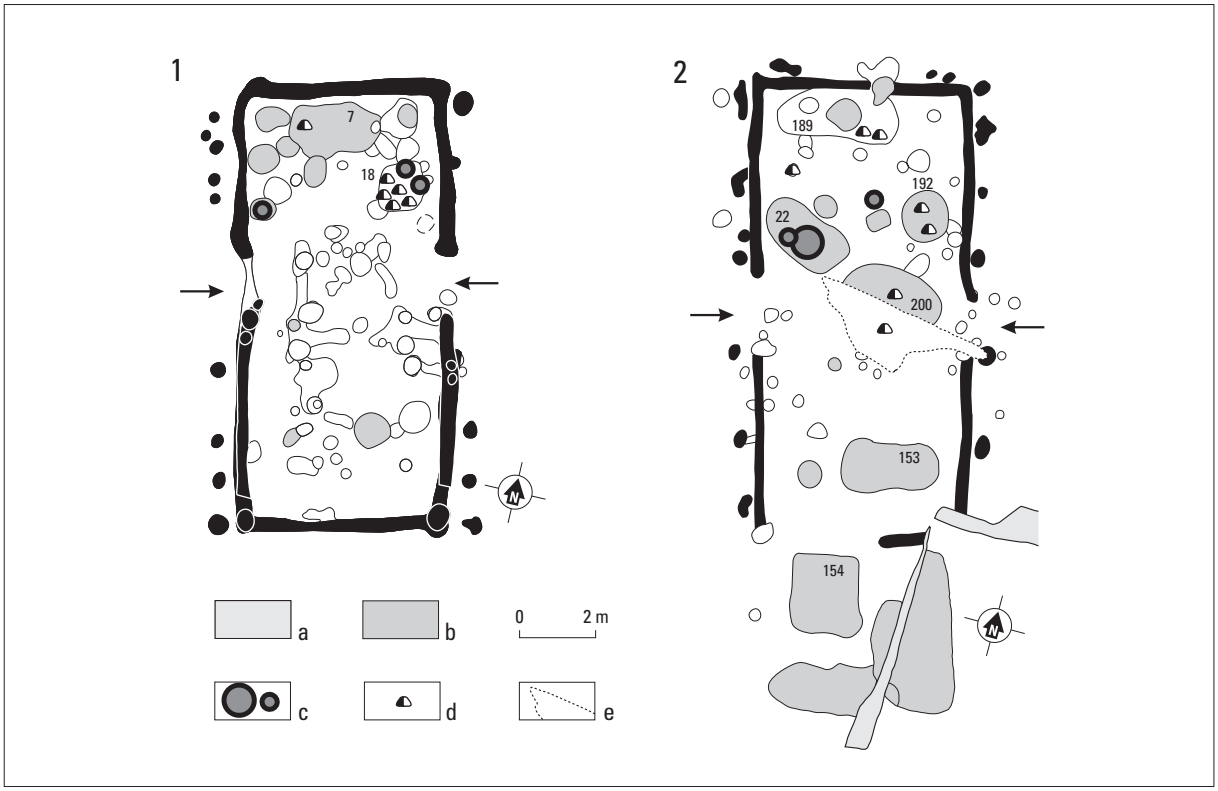

Fig. 3.31 Riethoven. Two Early Iron Age farmhouses. Plans represent overlays of soil traces recorded at different levels. After Slofstra 1991a, fig. 3. a) not excavated; b) pits with large charcoal concentrations and pits in which fires were lit; c) complete vessel; d) spindle whorl; e) recent disturbance.

A handful of Early Iron Age farmhouses that have been excavated in the MDS region can be used to explore the nature of this depositional practice further. Two farmhouses at Riethoven (fig. 3.31), two at Sint-Oedenrode, and one at Someren (fig. 3.32) included within their plans a number of pits, ranging from small circular ones to large rectangular shapes.[177] A second house at Someren included two large pits. Oval to rectangular pits with straight-sided walls and a flat base are not uncommon inside plans of farmhouses, especially in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age.[178] They are usually interpreted as indoor silos or cellars, used during the habitation phase of the house. The houses in Riethoven, Someren and Sint-Oedenrode differ in that the number of indoor pits exceeds anything a household could need for underground storage. Moreover, their distribution within the ground plan does not seem compatible with normal use of the indoor space. Pits are located in both segments of the house, in other words both in the living section and the byre. While storage cellars may have been covered by planks in the living area, it is unclear how this could have functioned in the byre section. Moreover, there are large pits in Sint-Oedenrode house 1 and Riethoven house 2 that are located in entrance zones that people would have passed through frequently. It is therefore likely that the pits – or at least a number of them – were dug and used during a phase succeeding the period of habitation. This secondary phase can be further delimited

176 Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 83.

177 Someren: Kortlang 1999, 173-176, house D/E. This house is interpreted here as a double house; Riethoven: Slofstra 1991a (houses 1 and 2); Vanderhoeven 1991.

178 Examples: Sint-Oedenrode house 1 and 2 (Van Bodegraven 1991), Loon op Zand 3 (Roymans/Hiddink 1991a, 115), Wisch-Silvolde (Hulst 1992), Colmschate-Swormink (Groenewoudt/Verlinde 1989), Colmschate-es (Verlinde 1991, 37).

to the period after the house was abandoned but before its superstructure had disappeared completely; the pits are often aligned to fit within the plan of the house but never intersect wall ditches.[179]

There were very few finds in the houses from Sint-Oedenrode, but the Someren and Riethoven examples are characterised by an exceptional richness in the archaeological deposits. While the fill of some of the pits in Someren consisted of clean sand with few artefacts, others contained numerous artefacts, including a group of four whole pots and a complete grinding stone in one pit, a complete vessel in another pit, over 1500 potsherds belonging to well over 100 different pots, loom weights and a spindle whorl, and many pieces of stone (flint, quartzite, sandstone, tephrite).[180] A high percentage of the pottery was secondarily damaged by fire. Evidence for burning was further present in charcoal-rich layers and layers of burnt sand in some of the pits. Fires were either lit in the pit or sand that had been exposed to fire elsewhere had been dumped into the pits. The houses at Riethoven show a very similar picture. Several whole pots were found, including a combination of a large storage vat and a small vessel standing on its head against the large vessel, together with spindle whorls (seven in each house), groups of fire-cracked stones, burnt loam, and large amounts of charcoal. In one of the pits the charred remains of several branches were found – sizable pieces of wood although not suitable as construction material. In both Riethoven houses fires were lit in some of the pits, which is clear from the orange-red discoloration of the sand under and next to the pits. A fire that burnt in a square pit with straight sides and a flat base outside house 2 charred a large quantity of stored grain.[181]

It thus appears that many of the elements of the depositional repertoire that was described in the previous section come together in the Someren and Riethoven houses: complete pottery (both single pots and pottery groups), domestic artefacts destroyed by fire (pottery, spindle whorls, and loom weights, in combination with stones, charcoal and burnt loam), and in the case of Riethoven cereal deposits. The phase of abandonment and a period of limited duration following the abandonment of these houses was accompanied by a range of activities. These included digging pits inside the house, lighting fires, both inside the pits and in other locations, and destroying objects in those fires. Then, both material that had been in the fire and unburned objects were buried in the pits. In the (more numerous) cases mentioned above of deposits that were similar in character to the ones from Riethoven and Someren but did not occur in pits in the interior of farmhouses, it is harder to make a case for a temporal relationship with the abandonment of a house. But given the fact that considerable numbers of artefacts were thrown away, a timing related to the abandonment of a house makes most sense.

Several suggestions can be made regarding the interpretation of this depositional practice at and following the moment of house abandonment. One interpretation could be that this represents refuse dumping: all materials that were not deemed worthy of taking to a new house were buried at the site of the abandoned farmstead. The contents of the pits consist of the types of material that would have been used on a daily basis in and around the farmyard. Whole pots and other undamaged artefacts occur, but they would probably not qualify as high-status or difficult to obtain goods.[182] This interpretation leaves

[179] In the case of Riethoven 2 there are additional pits outside the house, following the axis and width of the house. It is tempting to speculate that the plan of this house resembled Someren house D/E, and that the original construction was larger than appears from the excavation plans. This would take away the problem of having to explain why a grain silo was dug directly under the eaves of the overhanging roof, where all the rainwater would have run down.

[180] Kortlang 1999, 175-176; Van der Horst 1997.

[181] Vanderhoeven 1991, 157-158. An estimate of the volume of the grain – in charred condition – exceeds 300 litres (c. 2,1 x 1,7 x 0,2 m).

[182] It is interesting to realise in this respect, however, that stone – tephrite for querns, and cobbles that may have been used for cooking – would have been brought in from considerable distances. Tephrite came from the Eiffel region in Germany. Groenewoudt and Verlinde (1989, 291) state that the granite cobbles in a pit next to an Early Iron Age house at Colmschate had been transported for a distance of at least 20 km.

Fig. 3.32 Someren. Segment of excavated area, with Early Iron Age farmhouses (A to E). After Kortlang 1999, fig. 18. a) post-holes of building; b) probable house; c) pit; d) other traces; e) depression; f) excavation boundary.

several things unexplained, however. If this was straightforward dumping, why was the material consistently burnt, why did people go through the trouble of burying it when the farmstead was abandoned anyway, and in some cases, why were vessels not carelessly dumped in a pit, but placed upright on the bottom or higher up in the fill?

An alternative interpretation is that the deposits represent the last stages of a set of site maintenance practices (see 3.3.4). Whereas during the phase of habitation specific deposits may have been placed in the ground in order to ensure the well-being of the farmstead and its inhabitants, the burning and burying of some of the belongings of the household after the abandonment of the house served to symbolically mark the closure of the period of habitation. To speculate further on this possibility: what to our eyes appear to be portable objects in a good state, may have been considered goods that could not be taken away from the house or its former inhabitants. A third possible interpretation is that the deposits represent the remains of feasting activities, and that we are looking at numerous pots that were brought to the house or its ruin for the preparation and consumption of large amounts of food. The observation that the pits in one house at Someren contained the fragmentary remains of over 100 pots may be an indication in that direction. Less clear in this case is the presence of objects such as spindle whorls. Such a feast could either have been held to mark the end of the phase of habitation or, at a slightly later stage, to commemorate the inhabitants, deceased or still living, of that house.

All three scenarios may or may not have involved ritualised aspects, that is to say a certain degree of formalisation of activities and the making explicit of central cultural values and cosmological orders. For the second and third interpretations in particular a ceremonial or ritualised character is likely. For the reasons mentioned above, an interpretation of 'straightforward' refuse dumping appears more difficult to reconcile with the evidence than different forms of activities, ritual or otherwise, that serve to symbolically mark the abandonment of the farmstead.

3.4.3 FARMSTEAD ABANDONMENT AND FARMSTEAD CONTINUITY IN A DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE

In the first part of this chapter, when discussing the diachronic patterns in the choice of location for new houses, a rough distinction was made between unstable and stable farmstead patterns. It is time to return to this issue, but now from the perspective of the abandonment of houses and farmsteads. It is no coincidence of course that similar issues present themselves in the construction phase and the abandonment phase; they are part of one and the same cycle. While for the construction phase it sufficed to present unstable and stable farmsteads as two distinct categories, for the present discussion it is useful to refine these categories, in order to show the variability in what could happen when a house or a farmstead was abandoned. There are four basic options recognisable in the data set of Middle Bronze Age to Early Roman period houses in the MDS region. From a high degree of discontinuity to a high degree of continuity these are the following:

1) With the abandonment of the house the whole farmstead is given up for habitation (fig. 3.33).
2) The house is abandoned, but habitation continues in a house in the same farmyard (fig. 3.23).
3) The house is abandoned and demolished, and a new house is then constructed on the same spot (fig. 3.34).
4) The house is incorporated in a new house (or partly abandoned and partly incorporated) (fig. 3.35).

There are no clear boundaries between the four categories, and one could argue that they present different points on a continuum. In a way, the greatest difference is between option one – associated with an unstable farmstead pattern – on the one hand, and options two, three and four – all belonging to a

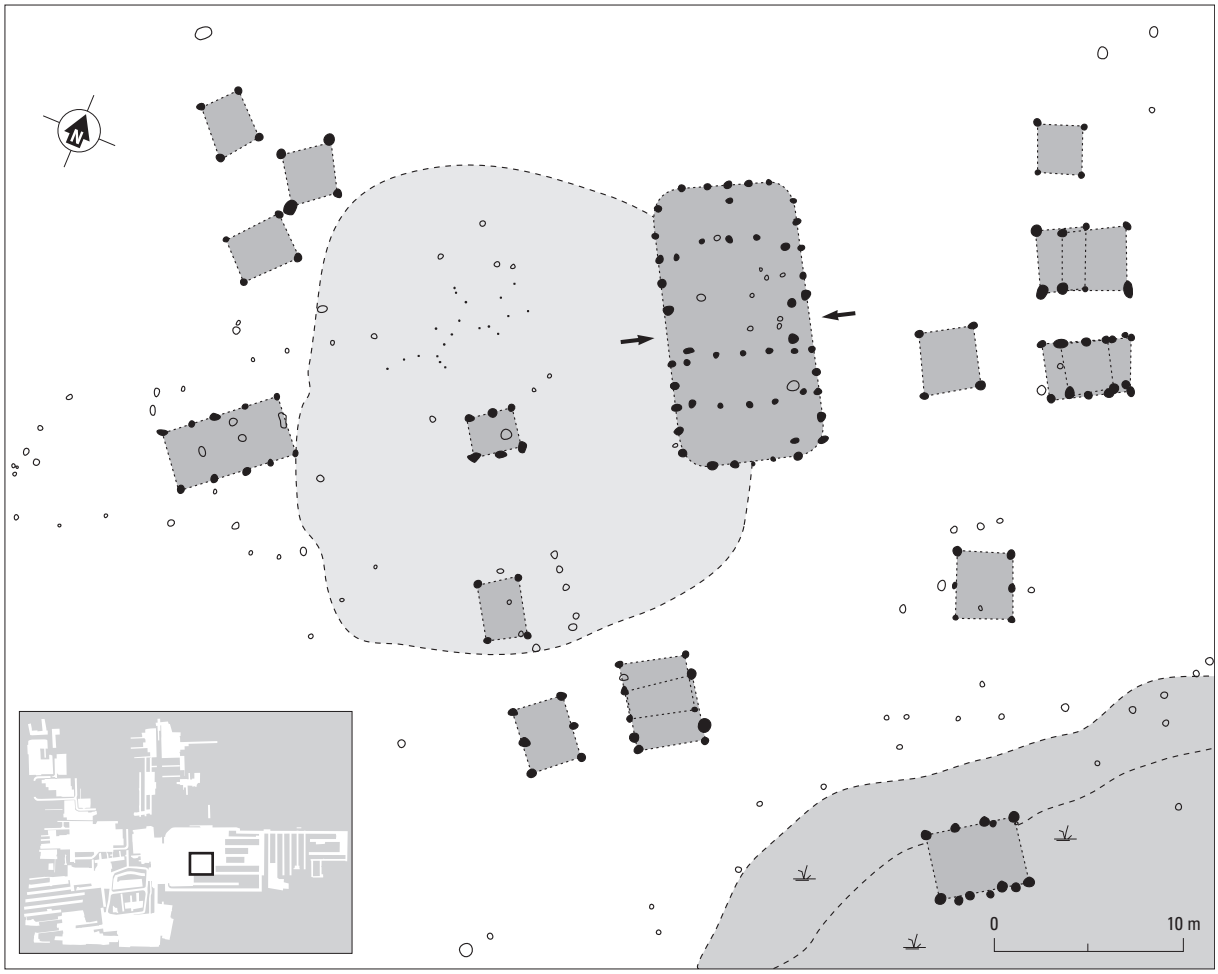

Fig. 3.33 Someren. Early Iron Age farmstead with a single phase of occupation. After Kortlang 1999, fig. 20.

fixed pattern – on the other. But this immediately raises the practical questions (at least for the archaeologists for whom farmyard boundaries are largely invisible) where farmyards begin and end, and whether moving to a location forty or fifty metres away from an old house would constitute a stable pattern. Seen from another angle, the biggest difference is between options one, two and four on the one hand, and option three on the other. Only in the latter case (option 3) did the house have to be demolished before a new one was built, or at least before the new one was first inhabited. As such, the degree of discontinuity is quite high. But at the same time, the abandoned house was replaced by one that clearly related to the old house, through its orientation, wall alignments or even exact location. In the other cases, the old house may have been demolished but could also have remained standing. Presumably, after habitation and upkeep came to an end there may have been a period during which the structure was still usable for secondary activities such as storage and keeping animals. In particular in the case of options two and four this may have taken place.

Clear patterns emerge when the choices that are made are looked at diachronically.[183] During the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age option one is clearly the predominant choice, as farmsteads are almost

[183] Although the overall patterns are clear, it is not easy to quantify them. For a sound quantification of the percentages of choices made with respect to farmstead continuity versus abandonment, one would need to have a better grasp of the spatial extent of farmyards and the precise dates of houses.

always single-phased. The abandonment of the farmhouse and the abandonment of the farmstead go together. The abandoned house may be left standing for a while, as a slowly decaying ruin. It may thus have been a source of construction wood, or may have been used for storage or craft activities. During this period of decay, the abandoned farmstead will have been a symbolic reminder, a temporary monument one could say, of the household that had lived there.

There are no indications for the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age that abandoned farmsteads served as *lieux de mémoire* for extended periods of time.[184] Rather, in terms of transience and durability (see 3.2.3), the emphasis lay on transience. Inhabited places in the landscape were associated with a single generation, and following generations avoided that location for habitation, probably for decades. Significantly, already at the moment of house construction the transient nature of the habitation appears to have been taken into account. Houses were built in such a way that they lasted for roughly a generation, and no effort was made to build sturdier and more durable houses. The notion of transience can also be seen in the Early Iron Age and Middle Iron Age abandonment practices, as witnessed by large deposits of goods in pits in and around houses. Similar deposits are unknown from stable farmsteads with multiple building phases from the Late Iron Age or Roman period.

The Middle Iron Age and the earlier part of the Late Iron Age shows a similar picture with a predominance of single-phase farmsteads, and an emphasis on transience. The house types of this period, the Haps type and from the Late Iron Age onwards the Oss-Ussen type, are not characterised by very robust building materials and techniques. The builders of these house types probably did not envisage their constructions withstanding the ravages of time.[185] But, as can be seen at Haps, Someren and other places, the second option of building a farmhouse in an already inhabited farmyard gradually became more common (see 3.2.2). There is a trend towards a greater stability in farmstead locations.

During the later part of the Late Iron Age and the Early Roman period, single-phase farmsteads did not disappear altogether, but the shift in emphasis towards greater durability in farmstead location continued. Not only were farmhouses built next to existing houses (option 2), but farmhouses were demolished upon abandonment in order to build a new house on the same spot (option 3). The farmstead is thus passed on from generation to generation, during three or four building phases. In other words, many households inhabited places that were initially taken into use as a farmstead by their parents, grandparents or even by generations further back.

There are two ways in which this notion of durability may have been emphasised further. First, during the Middle and Late Iron Age there are occasions when people were buried in a farmyard (see 3.3.4). Even though it is hard to determine whether the grave was there while the farmstead was inhabited or whether people were buried in the abandoned farmyard on which they had lived, the spatial proximity suggests a conceptual association between ancestors and farmsteads. Second, the new house types that are introduced at the end of the Late Iron Age are much sturdier and durable than their predecessors.[186] They would have had a longer life span, and it appears that the long-standing tradition of building for a single generation was now abolished. Not only the farmyard but also the house itself may have been passed to a following generation. The enduring relationship of a family line with a farmstead would thus have been symbolised by the presence of a house built by the direct ancestors.

An emphasis on durability during the Late Iron Age and especially the Roman period may also underlie the practice that is sometimes observed of incorporating part of an existing house into a new house

[184] A possible exception here may be a location at Oss-Mikkeldonk, where in the Early Iron Age a farmhouse was built over the plan of a Middle Bronze Age house (Fokkens 1991a).

[185] Huijts in Schinkel 1998, 125.

[186] Slofstra 1991b, 147 also noted the correspondence between the greater durability of farmhouses of the Alphen-Ekeren type and the increase in farmstead durability.

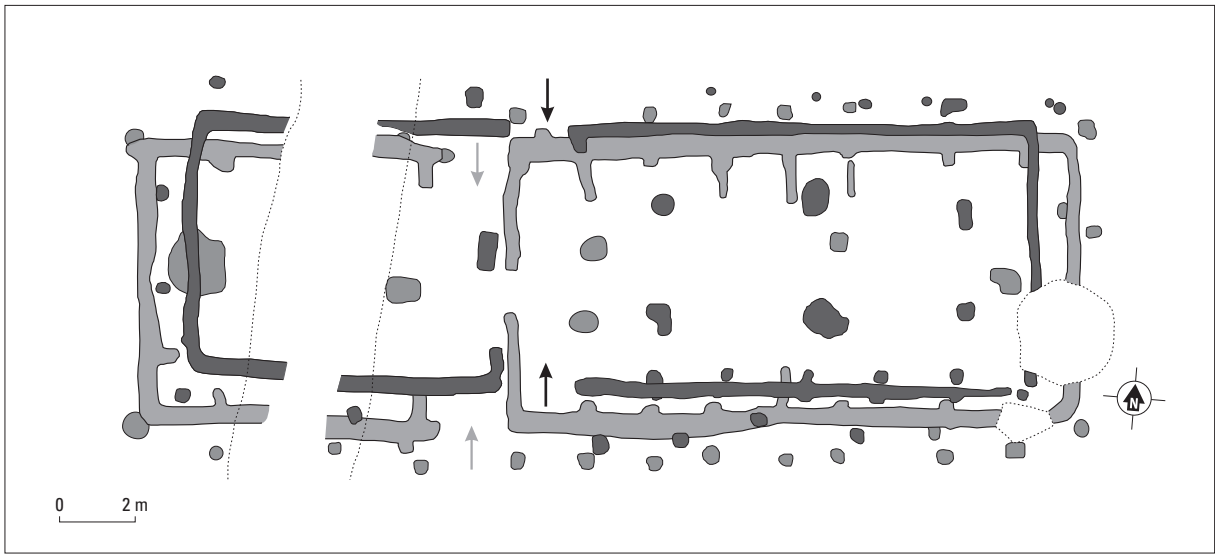

Fig. 3.34 Oss. Roman period farmhouses 105 and 106. Traces of compartments for cattle are visible in the byre section of the earlier house. After Wesselingh 2000, figs. 98a and 99.

(option 4). The clearest examples of this have been found in Noordbarge in the northern Netherlands, but this was also done at Oss, for example (fig. 3.35).[187] While reusing the short wall of a house in need of replacement would have had the effect of saving building materials, it seems to me that the clear links that were expressed in this way to the parental house and the history of the family line were a more decisive reason. Similarly, the great effort that was sometimes made in the Roman period to build a new house on almost exactly the same spot as the previous house becomes understandable from this perspective (fig. 3.34).[188]

3.5 HOUSES AND HOUSEHOLDS: CONCLUDING REMARKS

I began this chapter by arguing for the need to study the social and cultural dimensions of households and their dwelling places. Houses and households are the primary context in which much of daily life takes place, and questions of social identity and long-term transformations in the social and cultural fabric of local communities cannot be tackled without an explicit focus on the household. The main focus was on the architectural data set, using an anthropological perspective of which the key notion holds that households and the buildings they inhabit tend to be symbolically fused; a house is identified with its inhabitants and vice versa, and the social identity of the inhabitants is constructed in part through the inhabitation of the house. In order to be able to take the significance of architecture in the constitution of households into account, as well as the dynamic life cycle of the households themselves, the notion of the cultural biography was used as an ordering principle for the study of houses. Four basic phases of house biographies can be distinguished: a construction phase, a habitation phase, an abandonment phase and a post-abandonment phase.

[187] Noordbarge: Harsema 1980a; Oss: house 104A and 104B (Wesselingh 2000, 97-100).

[188] Examples of this practice: Oss houses 105 and 106 (Wesselingh 2000, 100-103); Oss-IJsselstraat 1, 2 and 3 (Wesselingh 1993).

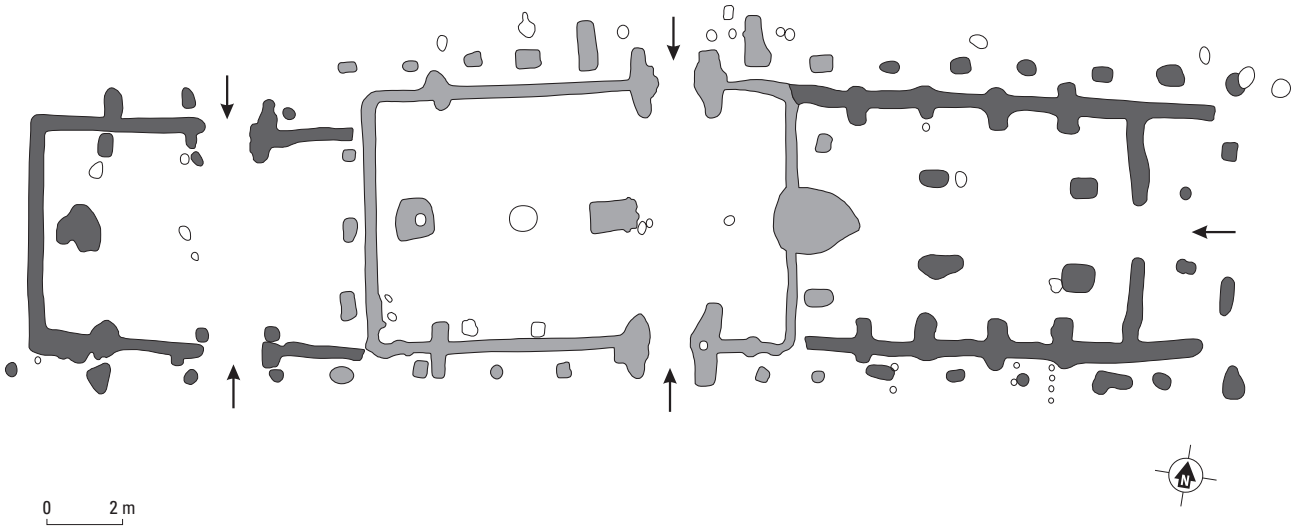

Fig. 3.35 Oss. Roman period farmhouses 104a and 104 b. The original structure (104a) has been enlarged on both short ends (104b). After Wesselingh 2000, figs. 96 and 97.

The construction phase of houses during the Bronze Age and Iron Age took place perhaps during the formative phase of the household. Building a house may have been an important rite of passage in the lives of the future inhabitants, one that was accompanied by the acquisition of a new status, new rights and responsibilities within the local community. But house construction was not a project that concerned only the future inhabitants. The sheer amount of work alone would have turned it into a communal project. Social relationships between kin, affines and other social categories would have been established, redefined or strengthened, particularly if the house construction was temporally related to a couple's wedding. Moreover, if the new house was built at a previously uninhabited place in the settlement territory, as was the case during much of the Bronze Age and Iron Age, the local community would have been involved as a group, as it had to relinquish – at least temporarily – the communal rights over the location and its nearby land.

The habitation phase of the house was the phase during which the domestic cycle of the household unfolded. The farmstead would have been the focal point of the lives of the inhabitants, the place in the landscape with which they most identified themselves, as persons and as a domestic group. Some houses were renovated and extended, while granaries were added and replaced in the farmyard, pits and wells were dug, used and filled. This dynamic aspect of houses and farmsteads can be related to the changing size and composition of the household throughout its domestic cycle. At the same time it is likely that changing roles and social aspirations with regard to other households within and outside the local community affected (and were affected by) the physical appearance of the house. In certain situations the inhabited farmstead was also the place for 'site maintenance practices'.[189] Even though the precise nature of several types of deposits that occur in and around farmsteads is unclear, a certain degree of consistency in their contents suggests that they were the result of specific depositional practices. Some of these practices may have had an explicitly ritual character, others may have constituted the periodic dumping of refuse according to specific cultural values attached to domestic 'waste'. All, however, may have had a role in ensuring the continued well-being of the house and its inhabitants.

[189] Brück 1999a; idem 1999b.

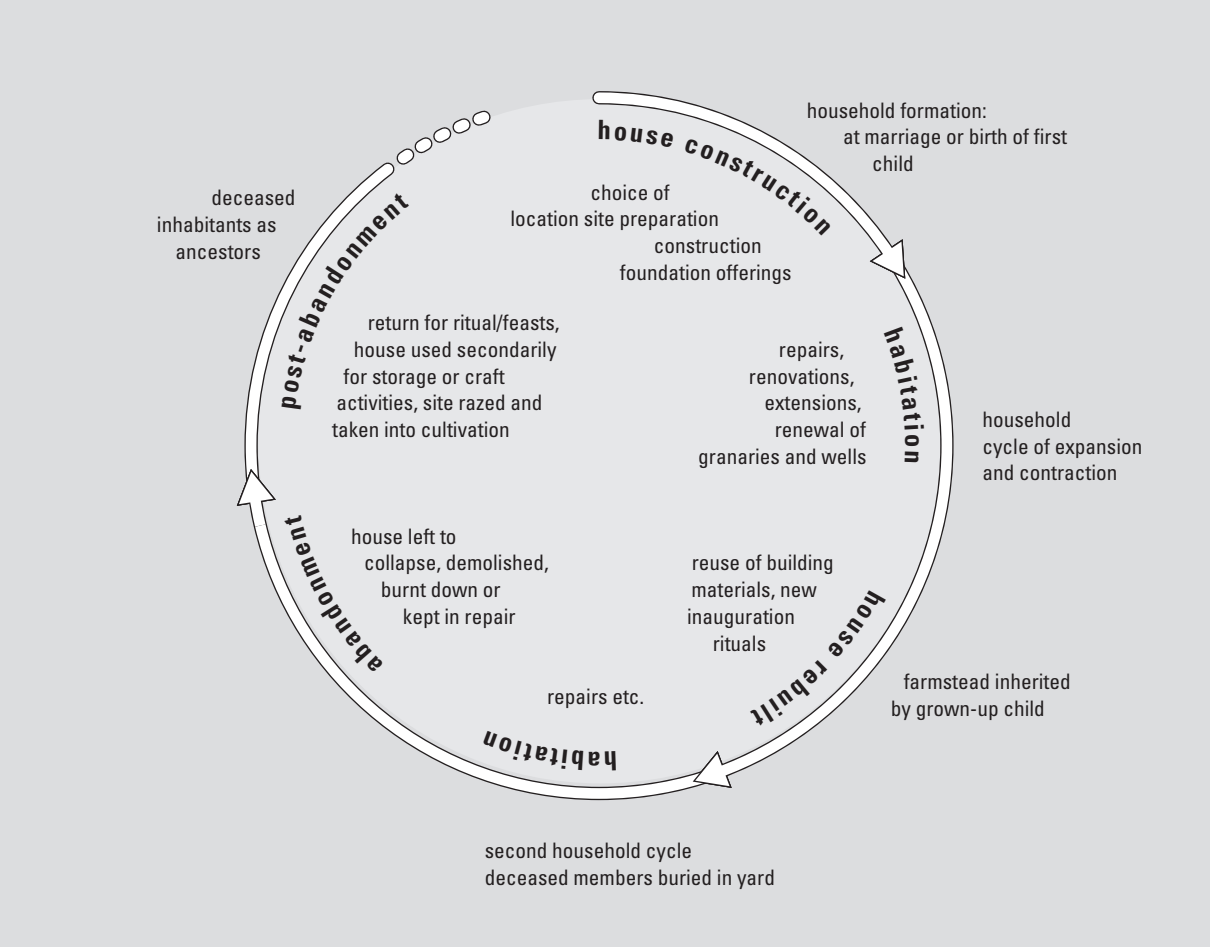
household formation:
at marriage or birth of first child
house construction
choice of location site preparation
construction
foundation offerings
habitation
repairs, renovations, extensions, renewal of granaries and wells
household cycle of expansion and contraction
house rebuilt
farmstead inherited by grown-up child
habitation
second household cycle
deceased members buried in yard
abandonment
house left to collapse, demolished, burnt down or kept in repair
reuse of building materials, new inauguration rituals
repairs etc.
post-abandonment
return for ritual/feasts, house used secondarily for storage or craft activities, site razed and taken into cultivation
deceased inhabitants as ancestors

Fig. 3.36 Diagram showing a potential cultural biography of a farmstead with a farmhouse that is replaced once, based on the assumption that the life span of the house corresponded to the life cycle of a household.

With houses that are built for an approximate life cycle of one human generation, the abandonment phase would generally have been related to the end of the domestic cycle. Supposedly, at that time, the people that grew up in the house had already moved out and had begun a new household in another part of the settlement territory (see fig. 3.1). The end of the domestic cycle, then, would have come when the remaining inhabitants died or moved in with younger relatives. The fact that many houses show signs of repairs forms an extra indication that the moment of house abandonment was socially defined, rather than determined by the moment that the structural frame of the building became unsound. While the scarce information on the treatment of abandoned houses does not suggest that houses were quickly demolished upon abandonment, the Bronze Age and Iron Age dwelling practices are characterised by strategies of transience. After a generation of habitation, not only the house but the farmstead as a whole was abandoned, not to be inhabited again for at least a number of generations. The transformation of a farmstead from an inhabited place in the landscape to a former house site, and the corresponding dissolution of the household was marked in some cases with depositional practices. These involved either the destruction and burial of a large portion of the household's chattels, or alternatively they were part of feasting activities followed by the destruction and burial of the utensils involved in the preparation and consumption of the food.

The transience that characterises Bronze Age and Early Iron Age farmsteads gradually gave way to durability. Farmsteads became stable places in the landscape where consecutive generations of a social group built their house.[190] The notion of the cultural biography of a house loses some of its analytical value in the case of stable farmsteads. It is more appropriate to think of farmstead biographies instead, no longer concurrent with single domestic cycles, but incorporating the successive life cycles of several generations and farmhouses (fig. 3.36).

This transition is drawn out over several centuries, beginning in the course of the Middle Iron Age and ending in the Early Roman period. This long time frame makes it difficult to discuss the transformation of habitation patterns in straightforward terms of cause and effect.[191] But it does not detract from the fundamental social transformation that must have been involved. Just as the transient nature of earlier farmsteads was not driven solely by ecological or economic considerations, the durable pattern that replaced it was not the result of increasingly sophisticated building technology or agricultural techniques that allowed people a more sedentary life-style. Both were embedded in social and cultural dwelling practices.

[190] Assuming that houses were not normally passed on to non-relatives as part of exchange relationships. Perhaps this was the case more often in historical periods.

[191] But see chapter 6, and Gerritsen 1999b, 95; idem 1999c, 109-110; Vellinga 1999, 100-101.

4 Local communities and the organisation of the landscape

4.1 SETTLEMENT TERRITORIES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

4.1.1 INTRODUCTION

In many languages there are multiple terms to describe basic groups of rural dwellings, units in which most of the population of agricultural societies lives. Some terms have a meaning that stresses the geographical, others the social aspects (for example settlement versus community), although typically a combination of social, spatial or other contents is implied (hamlet, village, parish etc.). These are often primary organising features – although never the only one – of the larger bodies of societies. They are central elements in the construction of people's identities, in the transmission of ideas and values, and in the organisation of subsistence strategies, to name a few features. Deservedly, they have received much attention from geographers and anthropologists.[1] It is the same with archaeologists, for whom in many regions and periods the settlement is a basic unit of analysis. In this study too, the logical next step of analysis after the farmstead and household is the settlement and especially its associated local community.

But having specified the object of study of this chapter, a problem of definition immediately looms large. As described in the previous chapter, farmsteads in the study region tend to be dispersed over the landscape throughout most of the Bronze Age and Iron Age, and nucleated settlements only began to develop in the last centuries of the first millennium BC (see section 4.5). How does one then define a settlement archaeologically? Even in the rare cases in which it is possible to point to several farmsteads whose distance from each other is significantly less than the distance to other farmsteads, the problems are not solved. The scale of excavations never allows one to be certain that a representative sample of the total number of dispersed farmsteads has been excavated, and moreover, the lack of precision in dating single farmsteads is too great to be able to suggest which farmsteads were contemporaneous. While it is quite possible to envisage an Iron Age settlement in the social sense, its geographical component is difficult to grasp through archaeological methods.

It has been recognised for some time in Dutch regional archaeology that a more appropriate analytical focus is not the settlement, but the settlement territory. This allows the researcher to base a spatial delineation of a social group not only on the collection of excavated dwellings, but also on elements of the archaeological record that often have a greater visibility, such as cemeteries and field systems. The notion of a territorially divided landscape has in fact been one of the central concepts in the archaeology of the sandy parts of the Netherlands for several decades. Its introduction into prehistoric and early historic archaeology is mainly due to the work of H.T. Waterbolk in the northern Netherlands.[2] Using the late medieval and post-medieval structure of village territories (*marken* in Dutch) as a point of depar-

[1] Roberts 1996; Rapport 1996.

[2] Waterbolk 1973; idem: 1974; 1979; 1982; 1987a; and 1995; Bazelmans/Kolen/Waterbolk 1997, 87-94.

ture, he looked back in time and argued that the main elements of this territorial structure were already present in the pre-Roman period.[3] In most sub-recent village territories, he found evidence for the presence of a single Late Iron Age cemetery and celtic field complex, which suggested to him actual continuity of the territories themselves. Going back even further, Waterbolk observed frequent continuity in the use of Bronze Age and Early Iron Age burial places, often spanning many centuries. He took this as an indication that the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age landscape, and possibly even that of the Middle Bronze Age, was divided into a very similar territorial structure (though more fine-grained compared to historic periods).[4] The strong emphasis on stability and continuity in Waterbolk's reconstruction of the occupation history of Drenthe has never met with general consensus,[5] but the idea of a territorially divided landscape in prehistoric times has not been contested. In fact, it has been at the heart of a range of regional studies.[6] Consistently, where it has been possible to establish this from the distribution of cemeteries or arable complexes, Late Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement territories measure between three to six square kilometres.[7] Calculations based on the size and duration of use of cemeteries have shown that the population group associated with the Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement territories was small, with numbers averaging between 10 and 30 people.[8]

In Waterbolk's model, one step up from the local group and its settlement territory are the adaptation area and adaptation group.[9] Anthony Heidinga has later suggested nuclear region (*kerngewest* in Dutch) as a term to convey both the spatial and the social meaning.[10] This is defined as an agglomeration of settlement territories in a homogeneous physical environment. Waterbolk assumes a strong homogeneity in the way the landscape within a nuclear region was exploited, together with standardisation in the form and size of settlement territories.[11] Five nuclear regions are assumed to have existed on the Drenthe plateau as far back as the Late Bronze Age.

In this study, I am more concerned with the concept of settlement territories than nuclear regions, and the question that needs to be dealt with at this stage is whether it is a suitable concept for studying Late Bronze Age and Iron Age communities in the MDS region. Essentially, the settlement territory concept, as introduced by Waterbolk and further applied by others, is based on empirical evidence. Its theoretical underpinnings have always remained rather vague, and were seen by Waterbolk himself as primarily stemming from genetic and biological factors.[12] Questions about the social implications of the concept of settlement territories have never been seriously considered. Why did local groups consistently number between two to six households? Why were there no units of fifteen or fifty households, by no means unusual numbers for rural settlements? A sociobiologist may try and explain this fully in terms of genetic disposition, while an economic determinist would recognise only the advantages of such a size range to meet labour requirements for food production. I proceed from the tenet that we are dealing here, as with all other forms of communities, with a construct that is primarily socio-cultural in nature.

3 Waterbolk 1979, 3-4; idem 1982, 99; Heringa 1982; idem 1985.

4 Waterbolk 1982, 101; idem 1987a, 205-207.

5 E.g. Spek 1993, 212; idem 1996, 176-180; Taayke 1996, 187-189; Fokkens 1998, 86-89.

6 Kooi 1979; Verlinde 1985; Heidinga 1987; Roymans/Fokkens 1991; Roymans/Kortlang 1999.

7 Kooi 1979, 159-160; Verlinde 1985, 324; Slofstra 1991a; cf. chapter 5 of this study.

8 Kooi 1979, 147; Verlinde 1985, 325-326; cf. section 4.2.5.

9 Waterbolk 1974, 155-158; idem 1979, 4-6, 1987b, 10-17 and 1995, 31-33.

10 Heidinga 1987, 154. In his later work Waterbolk also uses the term nuclear region (1987b; idem 1995).

11 Waterbolk 1995, 33. The emphasis that Waterbolk places on the socio-cultural homogeneity within nuclear regions in his earlier work, and for which the concept has been criticised (Heidinga 1987, 154; Theuws 1988, 140), is less apparent in later publications (Waterbolk 1987b, 12-13; 1995, 33; but cf. Bazelmans/Kolen/Waterbolk 1997, 88-90).

12 Inspired by ethologist Niko Tinbergen, Waterbolk writes: *our villages and nuclear areas are societal structures suited to our genetic disposition* (1987b, 13, my translation).

This leads me to the next question: to what extent did the population group in a settlement territory perceive itself as a community, and to what extent are archaeologists perhaps giving social groups based on common residence more prominence in the social organisation than is warranted? Anthropological studies have made it clear that the conception of a social group, - be it local community, ethnic group or society as a bounded and stable entity - is highly problematic.[13] People are always involved in multiple social spheres and social relationships of different kinds. And even though scholars who have criticised the notion of community as an analytical tool assume that their criticism is more valid for state-societies than for small-scale agricultural societies,[14] it is clear in the latter case too that each individual member of a local community is part of a network of social relationships reaching outside the community as well. One only needs to think of kinship and descent relationships, marriage networks, age groups, patron-client relationships, or religious communities to realise that a local community is at most a social network in which several kinds of relationships are embedded, a node where multiple networks converge. Even though it is likely that local communities were of fundamental importance in the lives of people in the Bronze Age and Iron Age, those communities are not something to be taken as a given, as an unchanging element in the social landscape. Rather, the meaning and importance of local communities is something to be investigated, together with the possible changes that took place in their socio-cultural construction.

If we are to use the concepts of local communities and settlement territories fruitfully in a social-cultural sense, it is clearly necessary to reassess them critically.[15] It would be a mistake, however, to discard the notion of local communities out of hand because of problems of definition or recognition - for instance, because all we have at our disposal as archaeologists is spatially ordered data. Although it is essential to realise that by taking those data as our point of departure we can at best arrive at a partial and biased image of the social life and identities of the people we study, that is no reason for not making use of the potential of the archaeological data. In fact, there are indications – and these are the topic of this chapter – that throughout the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age notions of community were meaningful and were actively constructed in several ways and at several levels.

4.1.2 THE SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITIES

It may be useful to begin by exploring some of the notions and concepts relating to the concept of community as developed in sociology and anthropology. I will focus on the already cited work of Anthony Cohen and colleagues.[16] To Cohen, the idea of community is essentially a symbolic one. The community itself is a symbol, but it is also created and marked through the use of symbols. These can take innumerable forms, from manners of speech to dress or hair-style, from shared day-to-day practices to festive occasions, from gossip to ritual - all those things, in short, that would make an outsider who is unfamiliar with 'the way things are done' stand out. A key aspect of community, therefore, is its relational character: it implies that people feel that they have something in common with each other, and that what they share is not shared with others. The symbols used to mark a community create boundaries, and thus

[13] Cohen 1985; Anderson 1991; Kuper 1992; Barth 1992, 29-30; Hannerz 1992. For a concise overview of the history of the sociological and anthropological debates on communities see especially Cohen 1985, 19-38. Cf. also Rapport 1996; Yaeger/Canuto 1999, 2-9, followed by archaeological case studies.

[14] Kuper 1992, 6-7; Hannerz 1992.

[15] Gerritsen in press.

[16] Cohen 1982; idem 1985 and 1986.

members and non-members, insiders and outsiders.[17] But as with all symbols, these boundaries, and in fact the meaning of the community itself, contain a certain degree of vagueness and ambiguity. Not all members perceive the community and its boundaries in the same way, nor is the significance for each individual member the same at all times and in all contexts. This is perhaps clearest with regard to feelings of belonging and identity. While someone may be acutely aware of his or her nationality when abroad (in other words when there is interaction across community boundaries),[18] during that person's day-to-day life notions of inhabiting a particular town or neighbourhood, or of belonging to a certain occupational or religious community or social stratum may be much more important, each depending on time and context.[19] Ambiguity and flexibility contribute to the effectiveness of community symbols, and make it possible for people to belong to a community without ascribing the same meanings to that community as all other members do.[20]

Cohen and others also observe that communities do not exist outside the lives of their members. They are not a given, natural structure, but are constantly created and reproduced in social practices through which a group defines itself.[21] Through these practices a group distinguishes itself from other groups, although the form and structure of these practices need not differ from those of neighbouring communities. Especially in the case of small, localised communities it is likely that symbols used to create and maintain boundaries (think for example of a seasonal feast or a recurring formation of a labour group) differ very little from those of nearby communities. This does not detract, however, from the reality of the experiences of belonging and the social boundaries that are thus created.

There is great variety in the constitution and structure of communities, but there are some common threads which can provide leads for a study of prehistoric communities.[22] One such characteristic is a connection between a sense of community and a sense of belonging to a locality. The notion of locality is not restricted to a certain geographical size.[23] It could theoretically be used to define a global scale, but given the present focus on local communities of no more than a few dozen people, the relevant localities are much more likely to have been in the range from specific places (a farmstead, a place of birth, a settlement territory) to micro-regions (an agglomeration of settlement territories). These scales of locality would not have been relevant for all communities that were potentially significant for an Iron Age inhabitant of the MDS region – think for example of communities of elites involved in long-distance exchange networks, or communities whose membership is altogether unrelated to principles of locality

17 On the conceptual as well as physical natures of boundaries: Pellow 1996; Hardie 1996. My concern in this chapter is with the way communities define themselves in respect to other human groups through their interaction with the landscape. I recognise, however, that a related, and potentially relevant line of enquiry, is the ways human communities define themselves in relation to the non-human world (e.g. Appadurai 1995, 208; Århem 1998, 84-94).

18 Barth 1969.

19 Geary (1983) uses the term 'situational construct' to indicate that identities are contextually defined.

20 Cohen 1985, 12-13.

21 Cohen 1985; Mewett 1986, 72; Rapport 1996; Lovell 1998a.

22 The fact that I am confining myself to geographically-defined communities helps in this respect as well. In many definitions of communities there is always an aspect of locality involved (Vitek/Jackson 1996; Lovell 1998a; idem 1998b). For example, Livingston writes: [*a*] *sense of community is most simply put as an awareness of simultaneous* belonging *to both a society and a place* (1996, 132). Others have questioned the necessity of a geographical component to community (Parkin 1998), and as explained above, I assume that although local communities (i.e. based on common residence rather than on age, religion or status) were an important element of society, they were never the only type of community.

23 A note on terminology: the term locality, as defined by Appadurai (1995) and Lovell (1998a) is used here. It is similar to the term 'locale' (Giddens 1979, 206-207; idem 1984, 118-122, 375), or 'place' (as opposed to space, Hirsch 1995). All three terms carry a meaning of meaningful, socialised space.

– but certainly for most. Another characteristic feature of communities is that they are constructed within a historically grounded context.[24] Memory and history, given expression in a group's cosmology, myths and narratives are essential to the construction of identity and a sense of community.

Locality, memory and community, in the sense in which they are used here, are embedded notions; they stand in a reciprocal relationship to each other, and are thus produced through each other. While archaeologists have recognised for some years now that landscape can be approached as a cultural construct, little explicit attention has been paid to the reciprocal relationships between the constructions of community and landscape. I believe that the concept of the symbolic construction of community is a powerful concept to study the ways in which groups in the past constructed themselves as a group and created places for themselves in the landscape. In other words, it provides a way to adopt a dwelling perspective, as defined in chapter 1.

These themes, and their archaeological dimensions will be discussed further in the next section, but already at this point some specific questions can be asked to guide the analysis presented in this chapter. Which socio-cultural practices and symbols were available to create, give meaning to and bound local communities in the first millennium BC in the MDS region? And, especially, in which way were notions related to landscape and memory involved in these processes?

4.1.3 COMMUNITY AND LANDSCAPE

A sense of community is about collective and shared identities, and a powerful element in the construction of shared identity can be feelings of belonging to a locality.[25] This suggests that the landscape in which a local community is situated consists of places that are meaningful for the identity of that community. Thus a reciprocal and historically grounded relationship is present between community and landscape. By interacting with the landscape, through processes of dwelling and making places in it,[26] the landscape generates symbols and means of symbolic behaviour through which communities define themselves. But this is not a wholly automatic, unconscious process. Just as the construction of communities is a constant process, feelings of belonging are dynamic. They are created, perpetuated and reworked, and they can be mobilised at specific moments and for specific purposes.[27]

Feelings of belonging are also not of a single kind. An analytical distinction that is useful in this respect is between notions of locality and belonging that are produced through constant day-to-day interaction with the phenomenal landscape, leading to an intimate understanding of its soil, flora, fauna, and human population, and those based on the imaginary landscape that refers to the cosmological order, in which ancestors and deities reside and which present an ideal world and way of living. Hirsch has described this as the foreground actuality and the background potentiality of the landscape.[28] These two aspects are fully interwoven, but the initial distinction is useful in order to realise that there are important relationships between people's day-to-day lives of dwelling in the landscape and people's perception of the world. In addition to the construction of ritual sites and monuments, practices of house building, of making paths, gardens and fields are equally important elements in the production of locality.[29]

An influential paper by Tim Ingold is useful for linking the role of the landscape in the construction of communities to notions of territoriality and tenure.[30] Territoriality, according to Ingold, is a mode of

[24] Appadurai 1995, 208.

[25] Kommers 1994, 52; Appadurai 1995; Lovell 1998a.

[26] Hirsch 1995; Ingold 1993; Brück/Goodman 1999a.

[27] Lovell 1998a, 1-10.

[28] Hirsch 1995; Derks 1997, 126-127.

[29] Appadurai 1995, 204-205; cf. section 1.3.

[30] Ingold 1986, 130-164. Ingold's definition of territoriality is not the same as that used by geographers (e.g. Ericksen 1980; Sack 1986), who emphasise social relationships as a constitutive aspect of territoriality.

communication for the dissemination of information regarding the distribution of animals or people in the landscape. Territorial behaviour consists of those activities that pertain to marking or defending a territory. Tenure, on the other hand, concerns the way in which people relate to each other in respect to the land; it is about appropriation and holding rights to the land. *Tenure*, Ingold argues, *is about the ways in which a resource locale is worked or bound into the biography of the* [holder of rights over a piece of land]*, or into the developmental trajectory of those groups (…) of which he is a member. For it is only by virtue of his belonging to the community that a person acquires a relation to a determinate portion of natural space*…[31] This is reminiscent of the remarks made above about the reciprocal relationship between communities and landscape: people's relations to each other as an aspect of their relationship with the land and their appropriation of that land. At the same time, Ingold's definition emphasises the historically grounded and processual nature of tenure. It appears, therefore, that a study of the ways in which local communities relate to their territory can profit from a focus on land tenure, as the ways in which communities appropriate land is directly connected to the way communities construct themselves.

It may be helpful at this point to illustrate the issues that I have raised by briefly discussing two cases from contemporary non-modern societies. The first concerns the 'Are'are of the Solomon islands, studied by Daniel de Coppet, and shows a way in which the relationships between people, land and ancestors may be perceived in indigenous terms.[32] The second case, that of the Pirá-Paraná groups in central Northwest Amazonia studied by Kaj Århem, discusses similar issues, but also warns us of too much optimism about our ability to study forms of social life solely through the spatial organisation of the landscape.[33]

According to 'Are'are notions of land tenure, land is an entity fused with the ancestors. Through this fusion, the living (…) *are strongly subordinated to the land, that is, to their ancestors who are buried there and to whom they are related*.[34] All activities by the living are done under the joint authority of ancestors and the land: praying, healing, fighting, pig-raising, gardening, house-building, sea travel and the making of shell money. As such, all activities, ritual or mundane, are duties with a sacred character; they associate the society with the ancestors and the land, and have as their ultimate goal taking good care of the land. Land, it is said, owns people. Taking care of the land and obeying rules of proper conduct are not matters for individuals alone. They are a matter for society as a whole, and leadership has been awarded to three types of 'big men', who play a key role in leading rituals. The relationship between people and ancestors is given a physical dimension in the land at funeral sites. These are the sites where 'intermediate ancestors' are buried, who, in contrast to 'apical ancestors', had been normal persons in life, with a birth, ancestors of their own, and a proper funeral. Intermediate ancestors play a crucial role in the success of the activities carried out by their descendants near their funeral sites. They have been entrusted with the responsibility for both land and people, and because all people will be transformed into ancestors at death, it is not only true that land owns people, but also that people own land.[35]

As a specific, indigenous representation of the relationships between land and society, a case like that of the 'Are'are is of course of limited value in understanding land tenure in the MDS region. To my mind, however, this case illustrates many of the points I have brought forward in this discussion: the historically grounded importance of locality in the constitution of society, the significance of ritual as well as day-to-day activities carried out in the landscape for the symbolic construction of community, and the

[31] Ingold 1986, 137.

[32] De Coppet 1985. His study of land tenure is based on a text dictated to him by an 'Are'are paramount chief in 1982. Cf. also Bazelmans 1999, 53-59 on 'Are'are conceptions of the universe (with more references).

[33] Århem 1998.

[34] De Coppet 1985, 81.

[35] De Coppet 1985, 84-89.

embedded nature of property. Moreover, it demonstrates a point which is missing from Ingold's notion of tenure. He stresses human appropriation of the land, but by doing so overlooks the fact that this is one side of a two-sided process: the land also appropriates the people.[36]

A cosmology-based relationship between society and land is also present among Tukano-speaking groups in the Pirá-Paraná river system, who subsist on shifting cultivation, fishing and hunting. Society is segmented into five exogamous groups, each associated with a eponymous ancestor, an ancestral birth place, and a bounded river territory. Territorial ownership, consisting of an inalienable spiritual bond with the ancestral land, is associated with these exogamous groups. Within each group, there are a number of hierarchically ordered clans, each associated with a section of the river. The most senior clans are located closest to the mouth of the river, nearest to the House of Awakenings, which is the ultimate dwelling place of the souls of the dead members of the exogamous group.[37] The river landscape thus represents a normative model for the conceptualisation of the spatial and the social order, implying *a relationship of identity between ancestral river and exogamous group*.[38] The actual distribution of communities along the river, however, does not conform to this ideal, because alongside the land-'owning' exogamous groups, the social order is composed of residential, localised communities which consist of intermarrying clan segments. Residence confers tenurial rights to the river and the forest, but these rights are of a different kind than those associated with the ownership of the exogamous group. A feature of the tenurial rights of residential communities is an intimate knowledge of the direct surroundings, a type of knowledge that is necessary to be able to spiritually control and maintain the fertility of the plants and animals in the area. Even though this knowledge is part of the sacred possessions of the exogamous group, it is mutual property, in contrast to the land, and can be passed on to residential communities. People's identities are thus complex and based on a relationship with the land in more than one way: they are based on an identification with an ancestral territory and a line of descent, *and* on membership of a localised community which need not be spatially associated with the ancestral territory. Both are elements in the distribution of claims and rights over resources in the landscape.

As this second case demonstrates, the spatial distribution of communities over the landscape is likely to reflect tenurial patterns, but does not necessarily give a complete picture or an accurate representation of the conceptualisation of the ideal socio-cosmic order in a society. Or, in Hirsch's terms, there is an incomplete overlap between the foregrounded actuality and the backgrounded potentiality of the landscape. It can therefore act as a warning against too optimistic an interpretation of the way prehistoric communities defined themselves.

4.1.4 APPROACHES TO TERRITORIALITY AND LAND TENURE IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Even though in the introductory pages of this chapter the impression may have been given that discussions about the territorial organisation of the landscape have only been an issue within the Dutch archaeological community, there are of course several relevant debates and lines of enquiry that have occurred in an international context. I will identify and very briefly discuss some of those approaches, although I in no way claim to give an exhaustive review or do justice to the finer points that have been developed within the different approaches. My main purpose is to demonstrate how the questions asked here and the perspective chosen for studying those questions are related to and differ from other approaches.

[36] In later articles in which Ingold develops his dwelling perspective (1993; idem 2000, chapter 10 [1995]), he is more sensitive to this point.

[37] Århem 1998, 80-81.

[38] Århem 1998, 82.

Territoriality is an aspect of all approaches based on the site catchment analysis and site exploitation territory analysis developed by Higgs and Vita-Finzi.[39] There is a great deal of variation in the way these models have been applied and the variables that have been taken into account, but a general characteristic is the focus on a group's subsistence base and the way the surroundings are exploited to satisfy the group's needs for food, water and raw materials. In situations in which critical resources or the labour necessary to exploit the environment become scarce, territorial behaviour - i.e. behaviour aimed at control over the exploitation of a tract of land - is likely to become more significant.

The notion of control over critical resources is also central to Saxe's famous hypothesis 8 concerning the rise of formal areas for the disposal of the dead, and to Goldstein's modification of it.[40] According to this hypothesis, a society that has formal, bounded disposal areas for the dead is likely to recognise corporate groups based on lineal descent. The maintenance of the disposal area presents a means of demonstrating or legitimising descent and thus control of critical but restricted resources. Even though the nature of the critical resources was not specified in the original hypothesis, it has in most case studies been taken to refer to land, and in particular to agricultural land. In Europe, Renfrew and R. Chapman have perhaps been the most outspoken advocates of a territorial model inspired by Saxe and Goldstein (or at least the ones that have received most attention), in the context of the spread of agriculture throughout Europe and the appearance of megalithic monuments.[41] They argued that megalithic tombs, as formal disposal areas of the dead, acted as territorial markers among early agricultural communities for which prime cultivable land had become a critical and restricted resource. Thus, while building on the models presented by site catchment analysis, their focus was on mechanisms of land tenure rather than on land use systems itself.

Both mortuary studies and territorial marker models came under heavy criticism from post-processual archaeologists during the 1980s. Foremost in these criticisms was the lack of attention to historically specific contexts and to the cultural specificity of such notions as critical resource, tomb symbolism or ancestors.[42] More specifically for the European Neolithic, doubts were raised as to the possibility ofdemonstrating that population densities were high enough in respect to the available land to cause social stress and thus be a cause of territorial behaviour. If there was a source of social stress involved in the construction and maintenance of megaliths or other monuments, Hodder argued in an article discussing the meaning of Neolithic megalithic monuments, this is more likely to have been related to control over labour and reproductive powers than over land.[43] A key notion in the work of Renfrew and Chapman, that of the potential uses of monumental constructions to express claims to land or other kinds of resources, has not been contested, however.[44] Recently, some efforts have been made to contextualise the Saxe/Goldstein hypothesis, and to apply it to historically specific cases, both in prehistoric and in historical societies.[45]

In the sense that all approaches mentioned here – irrespective of the theoretical differences – are concerned with the relationships between social groups, ancestors and property, they are clearly related to the topic of this chapter. The notion that property – land, in most studies – is about relationships between people rather than about relationships between people and objects is thus implicitly or explicitly recog-

39 Vita-Finzi/Higgs 1970; Vita-Finzi 1978.

40 Saxe 1970; Goldstein 1980, 7-8. Cf. Morris 1991, 147-150; Parker Pearson 1993, 206; idem 1999b; Chapman 1995, 32; Brown 1995 for further discussion.

41 Renfrew 1973; idem 1976; Chapman 1981; idem 1995.

42 Hodder 1992, 45-80 [1984]; Shanks/Tilley 1987, 43-44; Morris 1991, 149.

43 Hodder 1992, 46-47.

44 Parker Pearson 1999b, 132-141.

45 E.g., Parker Pearson (1993) on Iron Age Denmark. Morris (1991) compares the cemeteries and burial practices in ancient Athens and Rome and suggests that differences in the permeability of these cemeteries were related to culture-specific traditions in the transmission of property.

nised.[46] But what to my mind is not sufficiently taken into account is that social groups themselves are constituted through their relationships with the land, just as they are constituted through their relationships with other groups. Put crudely, the fact that there is a social group is taken as a given, and territoriality is studied as the means by which that group stakes out and maintains control over land. In the previous section, however, it was argued that social groups do not come about and are not perpetuated automatically: communities are constantly created and reproduced through socio-cultural practices. In other words, the ways in which a community based on locality defines its relationships with the land are also ways in which a community defines itself. This is the key notion that underlies the approach taken in this chapter.

This perspective implies not only a different emphasis in interpretation, but also that a much wider range of data is included in the analysis than only mortuary evidence. Clearly, the treatment of the dead tells us much about the position of ancestors in society, and about their status in the conceptual triad of community, ancestors and property. A community, however, constitutes itself not only through burial rituals and its relationships with the dead, but through a range of cultural practices. In this chapter, therefore, I will look at several features that are shaped by the ways in which communities relate to the land, or rather, the landscape in which they live: settlements, cemeteries, cult places and arable lands. This choice has consequences for the aspects of social identity that are discernible and those that remain hidden. The world of conflict and aggression, of boundaries and of overarching political institutions – all equally constitutive elements of social identities as the world of farmsteads, fields and cemeteries – remain outside the picture frame. This is the result of pragmatic considerations, not of a narrow view of the nature of past societies.[47]

So far, a number of elements have been identified which are potentially important in the construction of communal identities. To end this introduction it is necessary to say a few words about the methodological aspects of the kind of study proposed here. An enquiry into the perceptions of the late prehistoric people of the MDS region, as with any project studying the ways in which the 'Other' gives meaning to the world, runs into epistemological problems. Can we know anything about the indigenous conceptualisation of communities from the way those communities organised the landscape? Is a translation to our own cultural categories possible? While I recognise the problems involved, I do think that a comparative perspective which focuses on diachronic change offers promising possibilities. This idea is based on the assumption that major changes in the organisation of the landscape, taking place within a historically and culturally unified sequence, will reflect changes in the perception of the landscape and people's ideological relationship with the landscape.[48] The resulting interpretations are therefore relative: they suggest how things were in relationship to how they were before. Supporting arguments for an interpretation of observed diachronic patterns can be found when contrasting or parallel changes take place across several of the landscape elements discussed in this chapter. For purposes of clarity, however, each of the sections of this chapter will discuss the developments within one category, and a diachronic synthesis is postponed until the final section of this chapter.

46 Bloch 1975; Hann 1998.

47 Cf. Fontijn (2002b) for a complementary perspective in which the worlds of conflict as well as of the creation and maintenance of physical and other boundaries are studied through an analysis of Bronze Age metal depositions in the MDS region.

48 Parker Pearson 1993, 204. An example of a comparative approach which focuses on temporally as well as geographically distributed differences is given by Derks 1997.

4.2 CEMETERIES AND BURIAL PRACTICES

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Until circa 1960 Bronze Age and Iron Age archaeology in the MDS region consisted primarily of excavations of tumuli and cemeteries in the uncultivated zones of the landscape, the former heathlands.[49] In the 30 years or so that followed, archaeologists directed most of their attention to settlement complexes. Excavations of Late Neolithic and Bronze Age tumuli came to an almost complete standstill in this period,[50] and only few, small-scale investigations of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age urnfields took place.[51] This changed in the late 1980s, when a new phase of targeted cemetery research started with the excavation of a small Early Iron Age urnfield in Beegden (fig. 4.1).[52] This was a salvage project, carried out intermittently over a period of two years, but it was possible to uncover the whole of the cemetery. Up to that time this had not been feasible or deemed necessary. When the opportunity arose a few years later to excavate an urnfield under the medieval arable lands east of Someren, uncovering the cemetery as completely as possible again became one of the main aims of the project.[53] In the years that followed, four more urnfields – at Mierlo-Hout, Weert-Raak, Roermond and Sittard – were excavated by the University of Amsterdam and the Free University Amsterdam. While all were salvage excavations, it was possible to investigate major segments of each of them. In the same period, a number of other urnfields were investigated on a smaller scale, both in the southern Netherlands and in Belgium (table 4.1). The recent phase of research has brought the total number of known cemeteries of the Urnfield period (Late Bronze Age to the first part of the Middle Iron Age, ca. 1050-400 BC) in the MDS region to around 400. Appendices 1 and 2 list these cemeteries and give details about chronology and literature.[54] Of the total, a Late Bronze Age date is certain or probable for 84 cemeteries, an Early Iron Age date for 192, and a date at the beginning of the Middle Iron Age for 34. For 167 cemeteries the date of use cannot be further specified than the Urnfield period.

Apart from the increased scale of the investigations, new research questions and goals constituted the main differences from earlier phases of cemetery research. They can be summed up as follows:

1) to gain a solid grasp of the chronological and spatial developments of the cemetery;
2) to investigate the spatial relationships between cemetery, farmsteads and arable lands;
3) to produce a sex and age analysis of the cremated remains;
4) in demographic terms, to establish the size and composition of the community that buried its dead there;
5) to establish the cultural biography of the cemetery: how did it relate to earlier elements of the cultural landscape, and how was it perceived and treated after it went out of use?;
6) to study social and symbolic aspects of burial rituals and grave monuments.

[49] See chapter 2.

[50] Theunissen 1999, 45, fig. 3.6.

[51] E.g. Annaert/Van Impe 1985; Engels/Van Impe 1984; idem 1985; Bloemers 1988.

[52] Roymans 1999.

[53] Kortlang 1999, 134.

[54] In the remainder of this chapter publications on specific cemeteries are only cited to refer to specific points and interpretations presented by the excavator. In other cases, references can be found in appendix 2. This list has been compiled by Nico Roymans, with minor modifications and updates by the author. It is based on a study of the published literature, the archives of the ROB, RMO and several provincial museums (up to ca. 1990), as well as information provided by amateur archaeologists.

Fig. 4.1 Beegden. General plan of the urnfield. After Roymans 1999, fig. 4. a) excavated area; b) recent disturbances; c) reconstructed features; d) ditch of grave monument; e) posthole or pit; f) cremation burial.

The renewed interest in burial research has already led to a number of significant new insights, and the group of recently excavated urnfields provide a solid and relatively well-researched body of data.[55] It needs to be borne in mind, however, that the data are not necessarily representative of all aspects of the burial customs of the whole Urnfield period in the MDS region. There are two basic biases. First, almost all newly discovered cemeteries were encountered under the *essen*, the medieval arable lands. These tend to be located on the soils with relatively high loam contents, and there are indications that the prehistoric occupational sequences of these zones differed from those of the more sandy soils. The long-term occupational patterns will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5. Secondly, there is a bias in the material towards the Early Iron Age and the beginning of the Middle Iron Age. The Late Bronze Age is seriously underrepresented in the urnfields recently excavated. As table 4.1 shows, only Nijmegen-Kops Plateau, Nijmegen-Oosterhout and Weert-Boshoverheide have yielded Late Bronze Age graves in any number, and, interestingly, these are three of the small number of excavations that have not been carried out in the zones of medieval arable lands.[56]

Cemeteries of the post-Urnfield period are much less well known than those of the Urnfield period, although this is slowly improving with the recent large-scale *essen* excavations. As will be explained

[55] Roymans 1995a; idem 1999; Roymans/Kortlang 1999; Kortlang 1999; Tol 1999; Tol/Roymans/Hiddink/Kortlang 2000 are some of the main publications and analyses.

[56] It is too early to conclude, however, that Late Bronze Age communities made little use of the later *essen* zones of the landscape for habitation and burial, and the lack of Late Bronze Age cemeteries recently encountered may be the result of chance. At Sint-Oedenrode a Late Bronze Age urnfield and farmsteads were found under an *es*. See also chapter 5.

site	excavated	19th c. landscape	use as cemetery (- = continuity, / = break)	references
Weert-Boshoverheide	1983-1994	heath	LBA-EIA	Bloemers 1988; Kremer 1996
Wijshagen-Plokrooi	1986	?	LIA-ER	Creemers/Van Impe 1992
Beers-Groot Linden	1986	riverine	LBA	Fokkens/Smits 1989
Beegden	1986-1987	arable	EIA	Roymans 1999
Grubbenvorst	1989	?	LIA	Stoepker 1990a
Blerick-Zaarderhei	1990	heath	LIA	Stoepker 1991b
Someren	1991-1992	arable	EIA-MIA	Kortlang 1999
Mierlo-Hout	1992-1993	arable	MBA/EIA-MIA/LIA-ER	Tol 1999
Geldermalsen	1992-1993	riverine	MIA	Hulst 1999
Berkel-Enschot	1992-1993	arable	EIA	Kleij/Verwers 1994
Tessenderlo-Engsbergen	1992-1996	arable	EIA	Creemers 1994; idem 1997
Veghel-Scheifelaar	1993	arable	MIA	Kleij/Verwers 1994
Lummen-Meldert	1995	?	MIA?	Creemers 1996
Weert-Molenakkerdreef	1995	arable	LIA-ERP	Hiddink 1996
Breda-Emerakker	1995-1996	arable	MIA	Van Hoof et al. 1997
Weert-Raak/ Kampershoek	1996-1997	arable	EIA	Tol 1998b
Oss-Vorstengraf	1997	heath	EIA	Fokkens/Jansen 1998
Roermond	1997	arable	EIA	Schabbink/Tol 2000
Meerhoven	2000-2001	arable	EIA-MIA	Arts pers. comm.
Wijk bij Duurstede	1977-1987	riverine	MBA/EIA	Hessing 1991
Nijmegen-Kops Plateau	1986-1995	ice-pushed ridge	MBA/EIA/MIA	Fontijn 1996; Fontijn/Cuijpers 1999
Nijmegen-Lent	1998	riverine	MIA	Van den Broeke 1999
Sittard	1998	loess	EIA/LIA	Tol 2000

Table 4.1 Excavations of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age cemeteries after 1985. The lower part includes relevant excavations from outside the MDS region.

below, due to the small size of the cemeteries and the lack of datable material in the graves, Middle and Late Iron Age graves and cemeteries are not easily recognised in the archaeological record. A thorough study of the burial practices of this period has yet to be carried out.[57] For the present chapter an inventory of 18 graves and cemeteries with Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age dates is available for the MDS region (see below). This figure can be compared to that of the Urnfield period only in the most general sense, as it is not based on a similar thorough search of archival records, and because it is clear that small and inconspicuous cemeteries have a much smaller chance than urnfields of being singled out for mention in preliminary find reports.

The aim of this section on cemeteries and burial practices is not to present a reinterpretation of the data with regard to the meanings of different aspects of the burial rituals, let alone to infer social organisation or long-distance contacts from exotic grave goods.[58] My main interest in the cemeteries in this study concerns their potential role in the definition and reproduction of burial communities, the representation of a group's ancestry and its claims to the settlement territory. A general overview of burial practices from the Middle Bronze Age to the Early Roman period will be followed by sections dealing with aspects of this problem.

[57] But see Roymans 1990, 233-237. Recent analyses and interpretations of urnfield-period burial customs have been published in Theuws/Roymans 1999.

[58] For the latter, cf. Roymans 1991.

4.2.2 BURIAL PRACTICES FROM THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE TO THE EARLY ROMAN PERIOD

The Middle Bronze Age (1800 - 1050 BC)

The burial rituals of the Middle Bronze Age societies of the MDS region have recently been the subject of a study by Liesbeth Theunissen, and I rely heavily on her findings here.[59] Burial under a round barrow is the burial practice that is best known archaeologically, but only an estimated 10-15% of the population was buried under, or as a secondary burial in, a barrow.[60] A small number of flat graves is known, but it cannot be ruled out that other ways of treating the dead were common as well. There was an increase during the Middle Bronze Age in the reuse of barrows for secondary burials. Both secondary burials in central position under a mound raised on top of the original barrow and secondary burials in the peripheral zones of the mound occur. There appears to be a weak correlation between sex and age and the position of the burial in the mound. Men, women and children all occur in the central graves, but peripheral burials consist mainly of women and children. A third position, under one of the posts of a post setting that often surrounds barrows, appears to be reserved for children.[61]

During the Early and Middle Bronze Age there was a steady increase in the percentage of cremation burials. Around 60% of the Early Bronze Age graves consisted of inhumation burials, while in the second half of the Middle Bronze Age more than 80% were cremation burials. This gradual development towards the total predominance of cremation in the Urnfield period is typical of the Lower Rhine region and differs from the more sudden and marked transition to cremation in Central Europe. After cremation, the charred bones were collected from the pyre (usually only a selection) and placed in an urn, a coffin made of a tree trunk (although these were more frequently used for inhumation burials), or buried without a container. Before the erection of the barrow, the body or cremated remains were placed on the surface or in a pit. Grave goods are quite rare and include pottery and potsherds, bronze and silex tools (chisel, axe, arrow head) and decorated bone and antler objects.[62]

Several types of barrows have been distinguished, on the basis of their peripheral structures.[63] The most common forms are circular ditches around the mound, with or without single, double or triple post circles (fig. 4.2), and, less frequently, barrows surrounded by a ditch and bank (fig. 2.4). The mound itself consists of heath sods or sand. The diameters of Middle Bronze Age barrows vary considerably, the average for the first two types being a little over ten metres, and for the third type around 26 metres. Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age barrows usually appear as isolated elements in the landscape, but from the Middle Bronze Age onwards groups of several barrows appear as well. The largest barrow groups represent dispersed cemeteries which were used for several centuries for the burial of a small selection of the population.

The Late Bronze Age (1050 - 800/750 BC, fig. 4.3)

According to the chronological scheme generally accepted for the Netherlands, the Late Bronze Age begins with the appearance of the first urnfield cemeteries.[64] In the northern Netherlands, the evidence points to a date around 1150 BC, while for the MDS region a date of ca. 1050 BC has been proposed.

59 E.M. Theunissen 1993; idem 1996 and 1999, chapter 3; Cf. also Fontijn 2002b.

60 Lohof 1994, 101-103; Theunissen 1999, 105.

61 Theunissen 1999, 98-99.

62 Theunissen 1999, 87, table 3.13, 3.14. Grave goods were encountered in 21 of 304 graves.

63 Glasbergen 1954, fig. 54; Theunissen 1999, 58-71.

64 Verwers 1969; Lanting/Mook 1977, 7; Van den Broeke 1991.

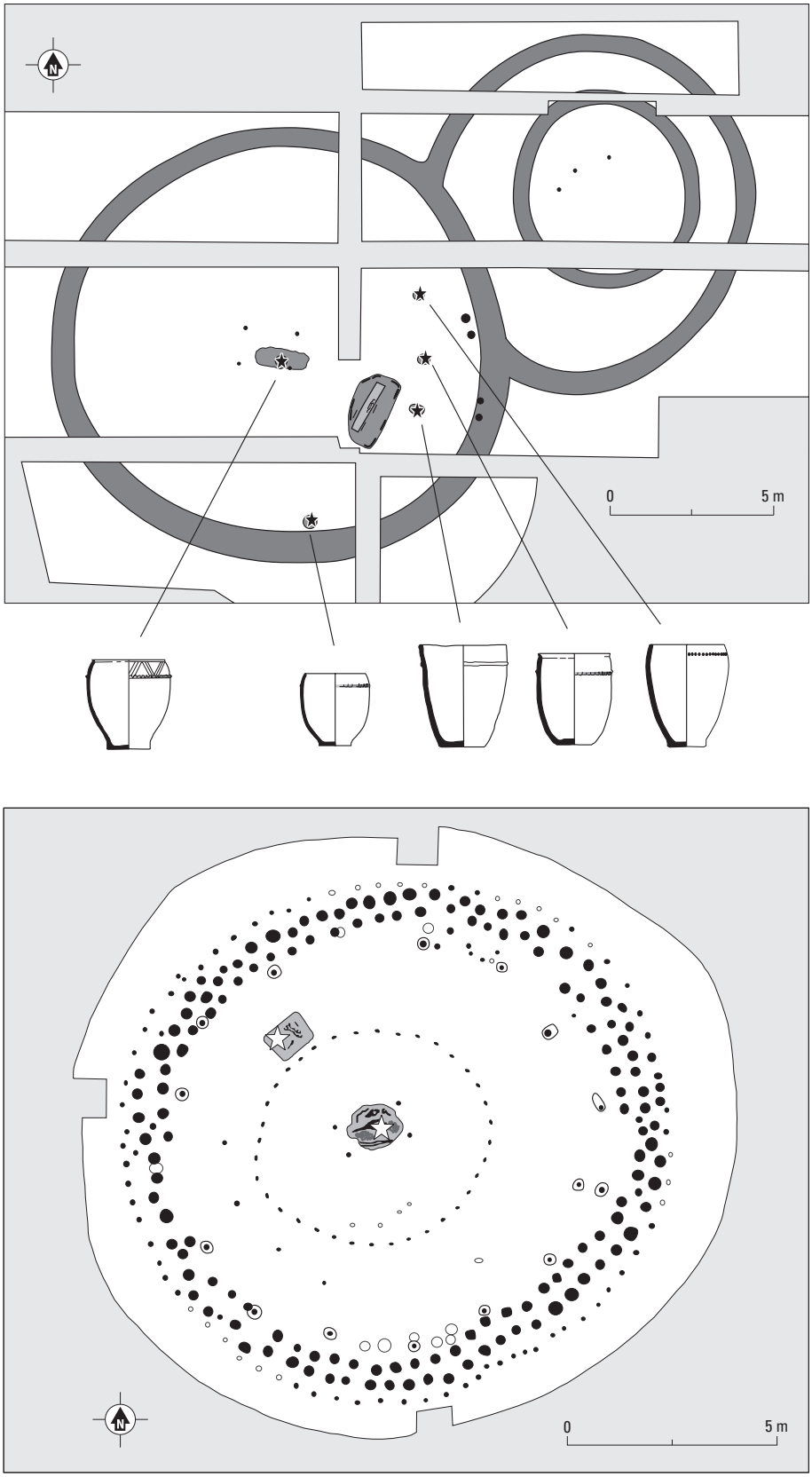

Fig. 4.2 Toterfout-Halve Mijl. Top: Barrow 1b, after Glasbergen 1954, fig. 9; bottom: barrow 8, after Glasbergen 1954, fig. 16.

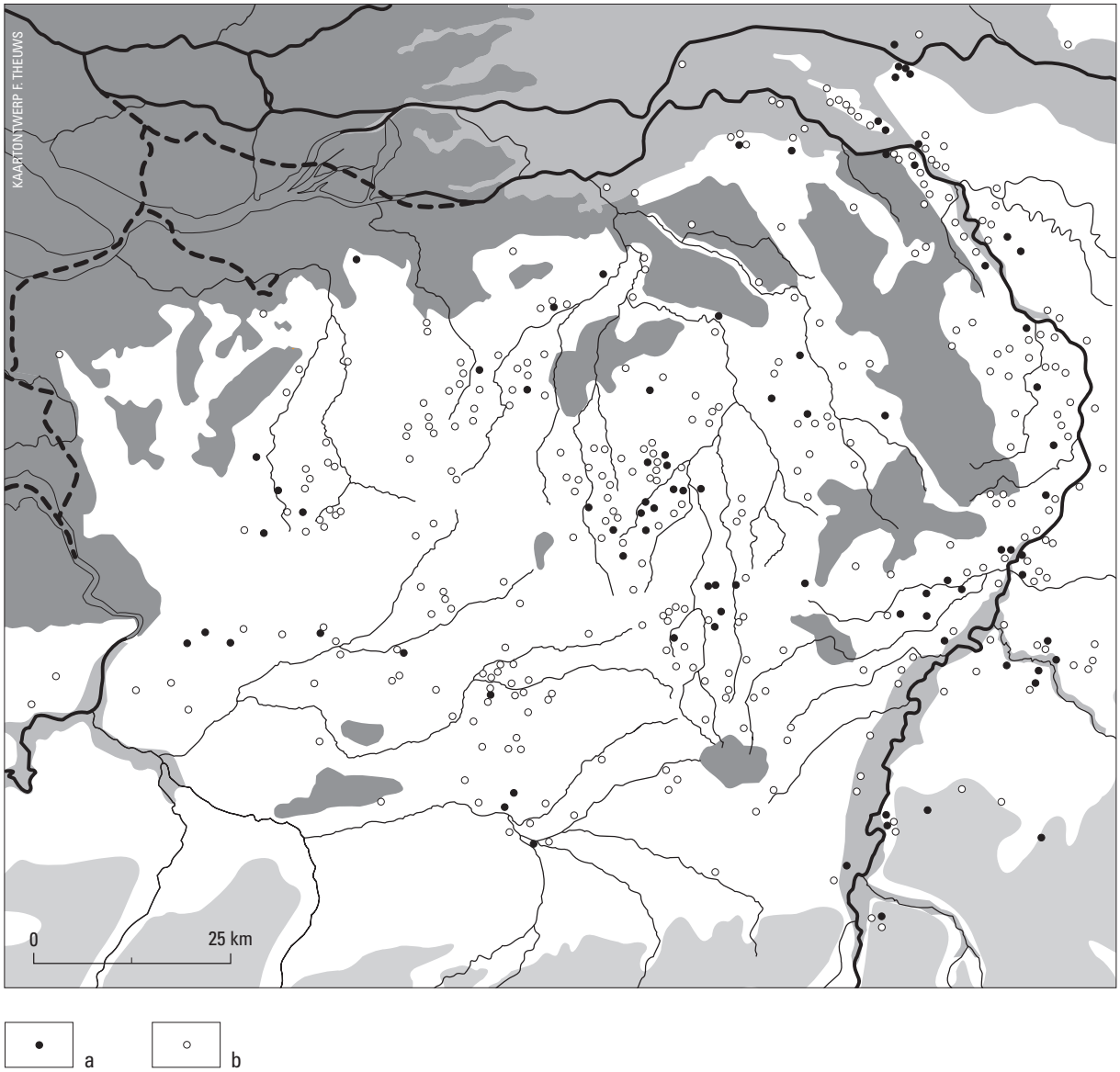

Fig. 4.3 Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region. Distribution of urnfields. a) urnfield with evidence for Late Bronze Age phase of use; b) Early (or Middle) Iron Age urnfield, or Urnfield period (no further dating evidence available). Cf. appendices 1 and 2 for details.

This is based on the earliest ^{14}C dates of a new type of grave monument, the *langbed*, or long barrow, and the earliest Hallstatt pottery in the urnfields (Ha B).[65] With regard to the burial practices of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, the MDS region is part of a wider cultural sphere centred around the Lower Rhine area, the *Niederrheinische Grabhügelkultur*.[66]

In many ways, the transition from Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age burial practices is a gradual transformation rather that an abrupt change.[67] All the people buried in the urnfields were cremated,

[65] Ruppel 1985; idem 1995; Van den Broeke 1991, 193-194. Relevant ^{14}C dates all postdate 2850 BP (1000 cal BC). Clear evidence for Ha A pottery has only been found at the urnfield of Neerharen-Rekem, and in the neighbouring loess-regions of the Rhineland (Ruppel 1995).

[66] Kersten 1948; Desittere 1968; Ruppel 1995.

[67] Verwers 1969.

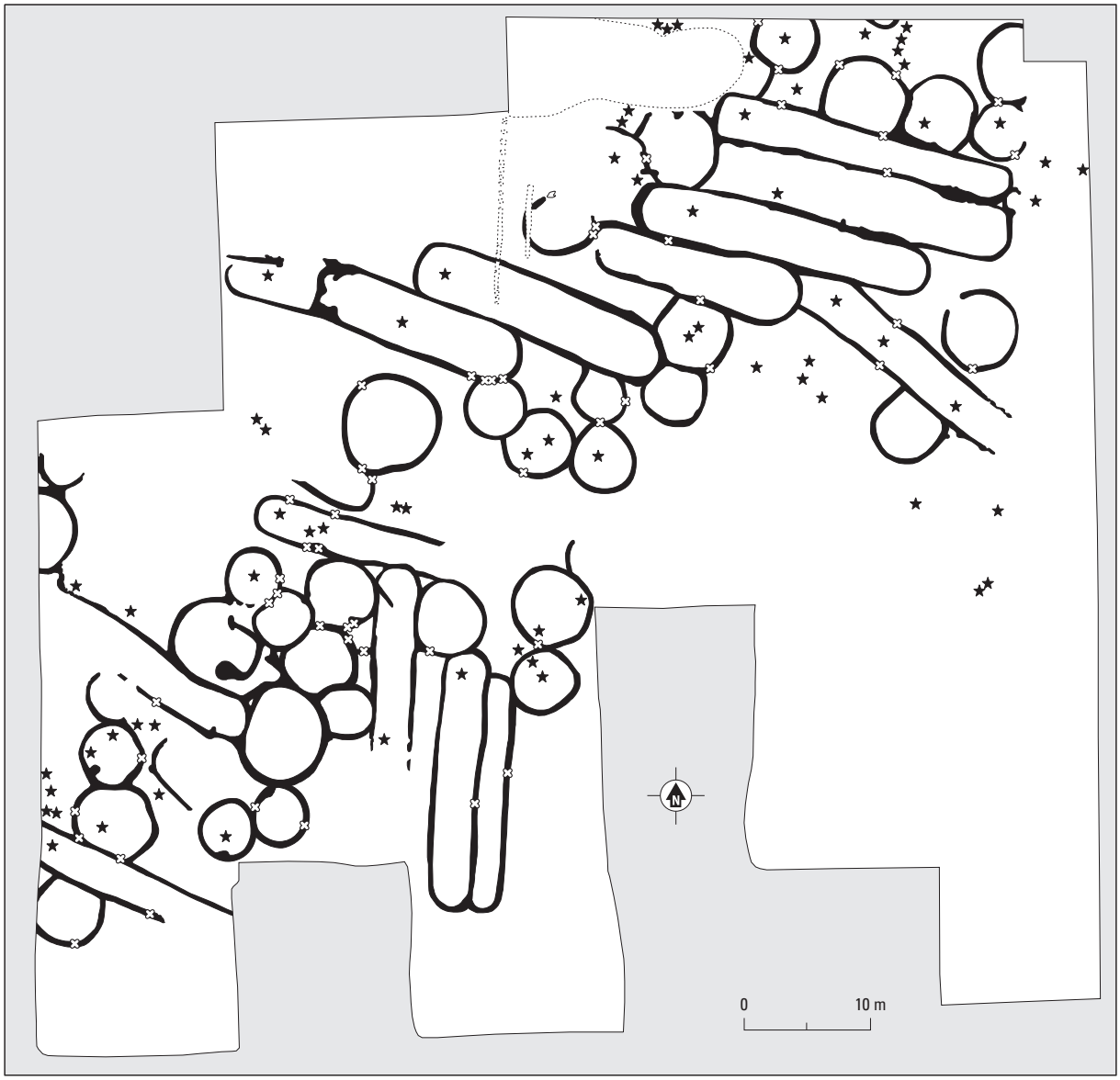

Fig. 4.4 Hilvarenbeek-Laag Spul. Late Bronze Age urnfield with clusters of long barrows, indicating the distribution of pottery in ditches. After Verwers 1975, appendix. Black star: cremation burial; white cross: potsherd(s) found in ditch.

but cremation already had a long history in the MDS region. Communal cemeteries with a fixed location instead of isolated barrows became the norm, but some of the barrow groups of the second part of the Middle Bronze Age can be characterised as formal cemeteries as well. Even the practice of collecting the cremated bones in an urn – the defining urnfield phenomenon – was already known in the Middle Bronze Age. In other words, things changed gradually and arose out of local traditions; the invading warriors of the Central European Urnfield Culture that were once supposed to have been responsible for the introduction of new cultural elements have long since left the stage of scholarly interpretations.[68] And yet, something quite fundamental changed in the burial practices. When a cemetery is excavated there is usually little doubt as to whether it is a Middle Bronze Age or an Urnfield-period ceme-

[68] De Laet 1974, 394-405.

tery. Transitional cemetery forms do not occur, and good evidence for cemeteries that began in the Middle Bronze Age and actually continued without a break as Late Bronze Age urnfields is scarce.[69] This difference in appearance partly has to do with the burial monuments. As already mentioned, a new type of monument is the *langbed* or 'long barrow', an elongated mound surrounded by a peripheral ditch.[70] Lengths range from a few metres to over 150 metres (the longest ones appear to be restricted to the Early Iron Age). Sometimes rows of parallel *langbedden* form tight clusters (fig. 4.4).[71] Round barrows are much more numerous, and are surrounded in most cases by a peripheral ditch. Post settings, sometimes in combination with a ring ditch, continue into the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age, but are no longer very frequent.[72] There is an increase in the range of diameters of round mounds, which go from about 2 metres in diameter to over 50 in exceptional cases. Generally speaking, however, ring ditches have a diameter below 10 metres, lower than in the Middle Bronze Age. Not all burials occur as central graves under a mound. There is usually a relatively small percentage of secondary burials, as well as flat graves and burials in ditches of earlier graves. A few urnfields, mostly located along the southern and eastern borders of the MDS region, consist primarily of flat graves, sometimes clustered around a small group of monumental ditched mounds and long barrows.[73]

Another striking difference is the much greater density of grave monuments in urnfields than in Middle Bronze Age barrow groups. Over the decades and centuries of use, urnfields became extended areas of densely clustered mounds and long barrows. The monumentality of the urnfields derives not so much from individual monuments (although some of them certainly would have made an impressive sight in their own right) but from the clustering of mounds. This difference is related to the drastic increase in the percentage of the population that was buried in the communal cemetery. I will return to this topic in section 4.2.3.

The pottery that appears in graves and peripheral ditches is very different from the Middle Bronze Age pottery, even though there are shapes and wares (the LBA *Grobkeramik*) that show much affinity with that of the previous period. Whereas the Middle Bronze Age pottery repertoire consisted largely of thick-walled, quartzite-tempered barrel shapes, the Late Bronze Age repertoire is diverse, both in shape and decorative motifs. Most striking is the *Kerbschnitt* pottery. The use of pottery in the burial ritual, and also in post-burial activities around the barrows, increased and changed. Burials in urns became much more common. Fairly frequently bowls, cups and miniature vessels were added as grave goods. Moreover, in Late Bronze Age urnfields there is sometimes a considerable amount of pottery – whole vessels, crushed pots and isolated potsherds – in the peripheral ditches. The fact that this pottery includes high frequencies of beakers and open dishes may suggest feasting.[74]

Grave goods are rare throughout the prehistory of the MDS region and the Late Bronze Age is no exception to this. Apart from the pottery already mentioned, small bronze items occur. These are typically related to personal adornment: beads, rings, bracelets, hairpins. Razors and tweezers are even rarer.

[69] The reuse of Middle Bronze Age barrows in the Urnfield period, and the location of an urnfields around older mounds are well-known phenomena, but when dating evidence is available it usually indicates a considerable period of time between phases of use. See section 4.2.4.

[70] Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 44-51.

[71] For example Goirle-Hoogeind (no. 155), Hilvarenbeek-Laag Spul (no. 159).

[72] For example Neerpelt-De Roosen (no. 104), Oss-Ussen (no. 177), Berghem-Zevenbergen (no. 180).

[73] For example Donk (no. 77); Neerpelt-Grote Heide (no. 105); Neerharen-Rekem (no. 128).

[74] For example Weert-Boshoverheide (no. 386; Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 45-46, fig. 6). The frequency and nature of the practices that led to the deposition of this pottery are difficult to gauge, mainly because most of the Late Bronze Age urnfields were excavated many decades ago.

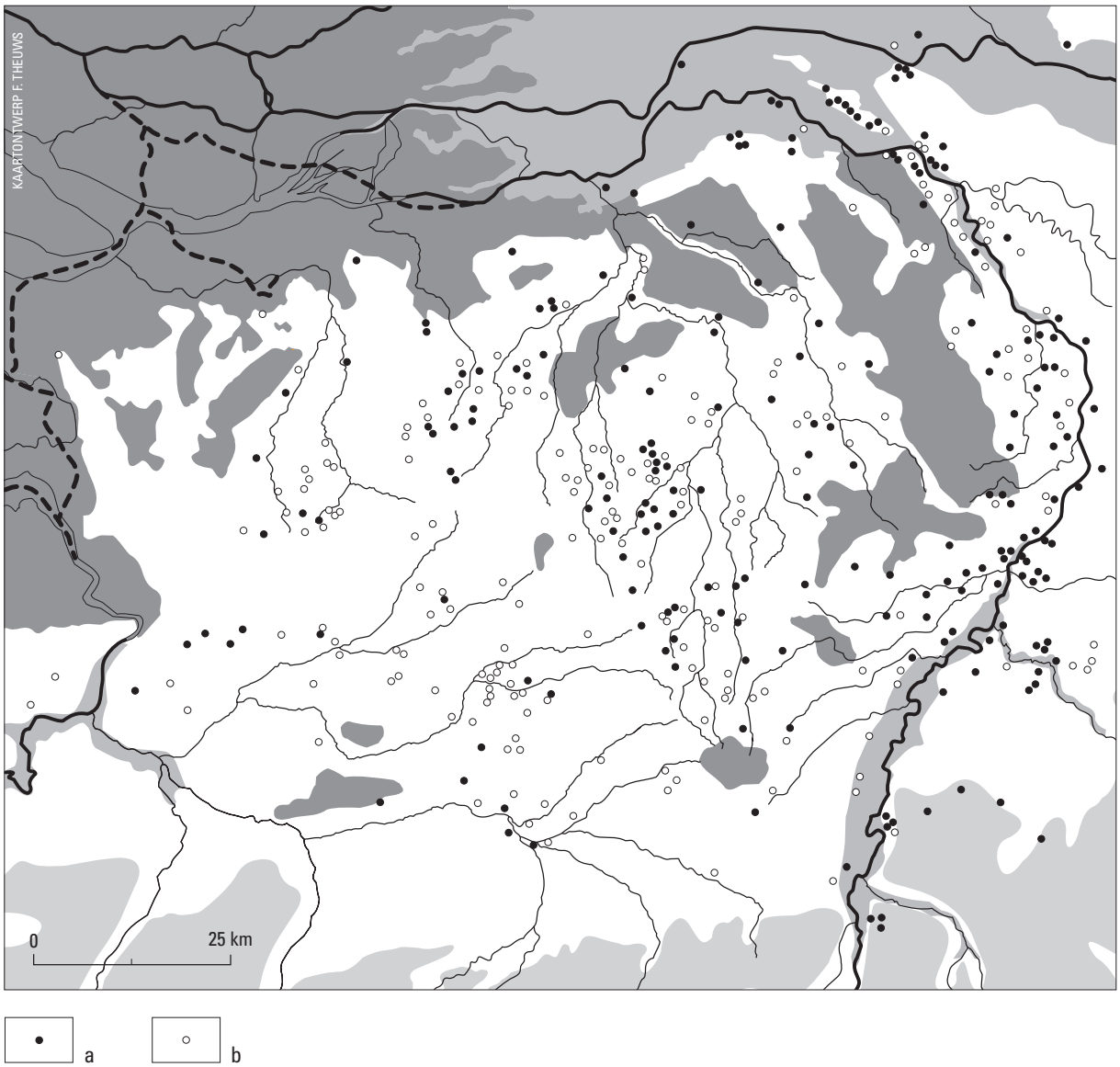

Fig. 4.5 Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region. Distribution of urnfields. a) urnfield with evidence of Early Iron Age or early Middle Iron Age phase of use; b) Late Bronze Age urnfield, or Urnfield period (no further dating evidence available). Cf. appendices 1 and 2 for details.

Only in one uncertain case is there weaponry from a Late Bronze grave context, a bronze bag-shaped chape of a sword.[75] From the excavation reports it is not always clear whether the objects accompanied the dead person on the pyre, or whether they were added later. Both practices appear to have occurred.

The Early Iron Age and beginning of the Middle Iron Age (800/750 - 5th century BC)

The Early Iron Age burial practices were in many ways a continuation of those of the Late Bronze Age. In fact, many or most of the urnfields themselves continued to be used, in addition to which there are numerous new foundations (fig. 4.5). Differences between the two periods appear to be relatively minor and determining the date of individual graves is not always easy. *Langbedden* are a feature of many Early

[75] Weert-Boshoverheide (Warmenbol 1988, 247; Roymans 1991, 77).

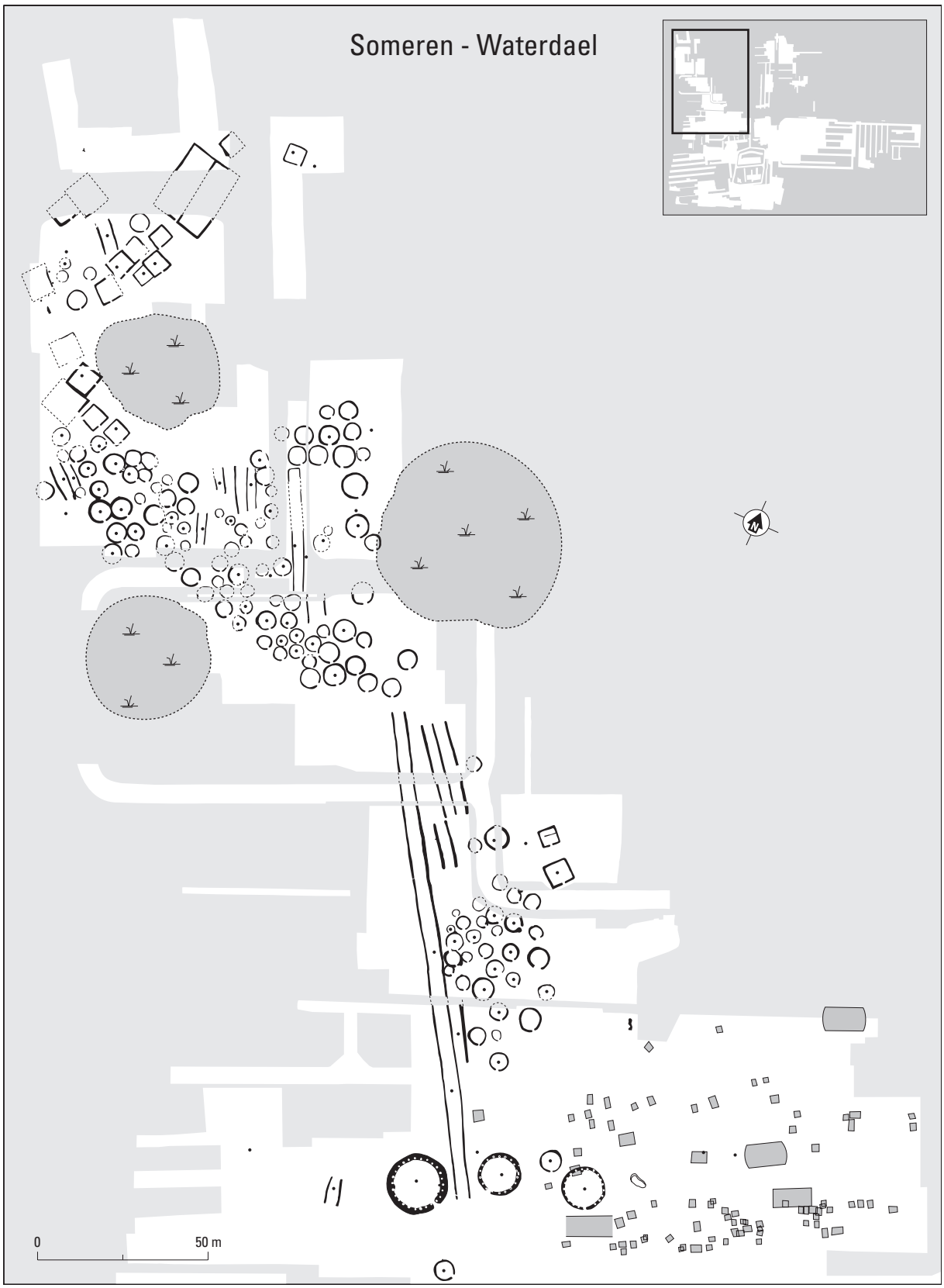

Fig. 4.6 Someren. Early Iron Age and early Middle Iron Age urnfield. After Kortlang 1999, fig. 16 and appendix.

site	assemblage	date	references
Oss-Vorstengraf	bronze *situla*, sword, axe, dagger, horse gear, yoke parts; vessel used as urn	EIA (Ha C)	Holwerda 1934; Modderman 1964
Baarlo	bronze *situla* (incomplete ass.); vessel used as urn	EIA (Ha C)	Modderman 1964
Venlo	bronze cauldron (incomplete ass.); probable grave find	EIA (Ha C, poss. Ha D)	Roymans 1991
Ede	bronze *situla* (incomplete ass.); vessel used as urn	EIA (Ha C, poss. Ha D)	Roymans 1991
Weert-Boshoverheide	1 grave with bronze chape, 3 graves with sword fragments, horse gear parts	LBA (chape), EIA (swords)	Bloemers 1988; Warmenbol 1988
Neerharen-Rekem	1 grave with fragments of 3 sword and 2 chapes, 3 spearheads	EIA (Ha C)	Van Impe 1980b; Warmenbol 1988
Someren-Kraaijenstark	sword	EIA (Ha C)	Kam 1956
Someren-Philips Kampeerterrein	sword fragments	EIA (Ha C)	Roymans 1991
Meerlo	sword, horse gear	EIA (Ha C)	Verwers 1976
Horst-Hegelsom	sword	EIA (Ha C)	Willems/Groenman-van Waateringe 1988
Heythuizen-Bischop	sword fragment	EIA (Ha C)	Roymans 1991
Wijchen-Wezelse Berg	bronze ribbed bucket, sword fragment, 4-wheeled wagon parts, horse gear, yoke parts; most objects damaged by fire; vessel prob. used as urn	EIA (Ha C, poss. Ha D)	Roymans 1991
Rhenen-Koerheuvel	bronze *situla*, socketed axe, 4-wheeled wagon parts, horse gear; vessel prob. used as urn	EIA (Ha C)	Van Heeringen 1999

Table 4.2 Early Iron Age 'rich' graves. The lower part includes relevant finds from outside the MDS region.

Iron Age urnfields, and differ slightly from the earlier ones in having open or rectangular short ends. A new element is added to the repertoire of peripheral structures in the form of round ditches that have an opening in the southeastern quadrant. There are indications that this innovation first occurred some time into the Early Iron Age. The urnfield at Beegden, which on the basis of the pottery types clearly belongs to the Early Iron Age, and on the basis of the high percentage of burials in urns (see below) probably belongs to the earlier part of the Early Iron Age (8th or early 7th century BC), contains only closed peripheral ditches.[76] In contrast, all of the circular ditches at the Someren-Waterdael urnfield (the foundation of which has been dated to around 650 BC) have an opening (fig. 4.6).[77]

Throughout the Urnfield period, there is considerable variation between cemeteries and sections of cemeteries in the percentage of burials in urns as opposed to non-urn burials. This ranges from 100 percent urn burials at Beegden and 75 percent at Weert-Raak to zero at Someren. The differences may reflect local customs, but there are indications that there is also a chronological element to the variation. It appears (but with the lack of recently excavated Late Bronze Age urnfields some caution is necessary) that there was an increase in the use of urns during the Late Bronze Age, and that the practice reached a peak in the earlier part of the Early Iron Age. This was followed by a decline in the use of urns during the second half of the Early Iron Age and the Middle Iron Age.[78] Several variants have been distinguished in the treatment of cremated remains when these were not collected in an urn. Close-packed concentrations of charred bones indicate that instead of a ceramic vessel a container of a perishable organic material, such as cloth or leather, was used.[79] For both urns and other types of containers, there are cases when pieces of charcoal and cremated remains are scattered around and over the container. In another

[76] Roymans 1999, 68-69, 72-74.

[77] Kortlang 1999, 144-145, 161-163.

[78] Verwers 1969, 18-19; Van Impe 1983b, 76; Roymans 1999, 73.

[79] Referred to in German as a *Knochenlager*, in French *bloc d'ossements*.

variant, the cremated remains are not separated from the charcoal of the pyre and are deposited as a mixture in the burial pit.[80] The amount of charred bone in these graves can be quite small, and it is doubtful whether all of these represent actual graves.[81]

Grave goods remain scarce and consist of the same types of objects as in the Late Bronze Age. Pottery (both with and without traces of burning), and small metal objects for personal adornment are the most common. Sometimes fragments of charred animal bones occur. Pottery fragments still appear in some of the ditches around grave monuments, but not in the same quantities as in the Late Bronze Age.

There is a small group of six graves in the MDS region and the riverine zone to the north, sometimes referred to as princely of chieftains graves, that form a striking exception to this picture (table 4.2). They come from Wijchen-Wezelsche Berg, Oss-Vorstengraf, Rhenen-Koerheuvel, Baarlo, Ede, and Venlo, and contain sets of metal objects that refer to an elite ideology and way of life, including bronze vessels, horse gear, swords and in two cases fragments of a four-wheeled wagon. Based on the imported bronze vessels, which were manufactured in the Alpine regions, the 'princely graves' can be dated to Hallstatt C (7th century BC) or possibly the earliest Hallstatt D period.[82] To this group can be added a number of graves that contained some elements of the assemblage, usually a sword and sometimes also a pair of horse bits. These have been found at Weert-Boshoverheide, Neerharen-Rekem, Someren-Kraaijenstark, Someren-Philips-Kampeerterrein, Meerlo and Horst-Hegelsom, and largely date to the Ha C period as well.[83] The fact that weapons were deposited in graves is all the more remarkable because there seemed to be an almost absolute taboo in previous periods on placing weapons in graves. Middle and Late Bronze Age weapons do occur in rivers and peat moors, sometimes in significant concentrations, but extremely infrequently in graves.[84]

The beginning of the Middle Iron Age was heralded in the urnfields by the appearance of rectilinear peripheral ditches.[85] These usually have an opening in the southeastern side or corner. The size range of square monuments is slightly higher than that of circular ditches. Sides of between five and ten metres in length are common. If only the soil from the ditches was used to construct a mound over of the central grave, all but the smallest graves would have been quite low. Unfortunately, as the excavated Middle Iron Age urnfields have all been levelled and covered by medieval *essen* soils, it is impossible to establish this.

In addition to square ditches, Someren, Haps and Mierlo-Hout each have one or two larger rectangular enclosures that date to the beginning of the Middle Iron Age. The one at Mierlo-Hout resembles a *langbed*, but it has convex sides (fig. 4.7).[86] It is nineteen by seven metres, and has an opening in the southeastern corner. A central cremation burial contained the remains of an adult female(?).[87] At Haps there were two adjacent monuments of 10 by 10.5 metres that contained several burials in their interior,[88] and at Someren a rectangular enclosure of 18 by 22 metres was divided in half by another ditch, but only very little of the interior could be investigated. These monuments, together with several rectangular enclosures of the Middle Iron Age at Oss-Ussen, are of interest for a discussion of the origin of cult places in the MDS region. There are indications of a genetic relationship between square and rectangular burial enclosures and cult places of the Late Iron Age and early Roman period.[89] I will return to the problem of the origin of cult places in section 4.3.

80 In German *Brandgrubengrab*.

81 Hiddink 1996, 21-23.

82 Roymans 1991, 37-41.

83 Roymans 1991, 20-26, appendix 2. Recently, a bronze Iron Age sword was found near Maastricht (Dijkman 2000). It occurred as an isolated find some tens of metres from an incompletely excavated urnfield (Maastricht-Vroendaal), but it is unclear whether the sword came from a grave.

84 Roymans 1991, 26-28; Fontijn 2002a.

85 For example Someren-Waterdael (no. 223), Mierlo-Hout-Snippenscheut (no. 220), Nijnsel (no. 211), Haps-Kamps Veld (no. 196), and Oss-Ussen (no. 177).

86 Tol 1999, 97-98.

87 Tol 1999, 106.

88 Verwers 1972, 34.

89 Slofstra/Van der Sanden 1987; Van der Sanden 1998c; Kortlang 1999, 148; Fontijn/Cuijpers 1999.

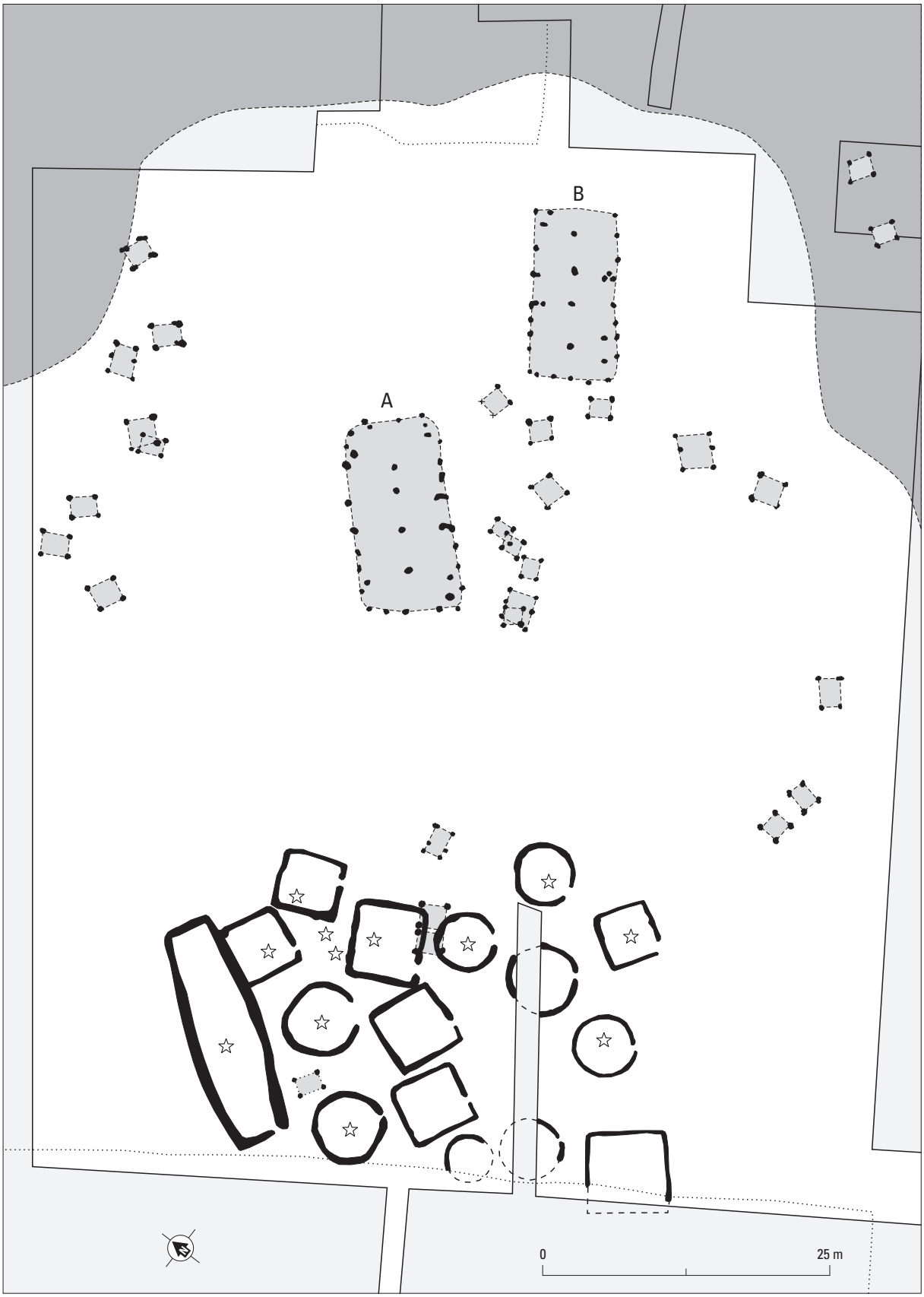

Fig. 4.7 Mierlo-Hout. Section of urnfield with Middle Iron Age grave monuments and adjacent settlement traces with Haps type farmhouses (A and B) and four-posters. After Tol 1999, fig. 13.

The 5th century BC appears to have been a period of transition in burial customs, in particular with regard to the location of graves. Of the recently excavated urnfields under the *essen*, the ones at Beegden and Weert-Raak did not contain burials that could be dated to the Middle Iron Age. The end of the period of use of the Beegden urnfield has been estimated as early as 650 BC, while the Weert urnfield appears to have been used until about 550 BC. In contrast, the Mierlo-Hout and Someren urnfields continued to be used for interments into the beginning of the Middle Iron Age. The Mierlo-Hout one was abandoned in the 5th century BC, the Someren cemetery even slightly later, around 400 BC. This pattern is confirmed by all other excavated urnfields: a long-standing tradition of communal cemeteries with a fixed location which had begun in the 11th century BC was gradually abandoned over a period of about 200 years, and after around 400 BC there was not a single urnfield in the MDS region still in use. During the 5th century, moreover, the first new cemeteries appeared that no longer belonged to the urnfield tradition.[90]

A mixed group of rich graves that contain Early La Tène bronze vessels (table 4.4) belong to the 5th century period of transition between the Urnfield period and the post-Urnfield period. These include early and poorly documented finds at Eigenbilzen and Overasselt. At the former site, the bronze *cista* was used as an urn, and was accompanied by a bronze wine jug and fragments of a second one, the goldfoil decoration of a drinking horn and a gilded bronze ring. Based on the finds, this grave has been dated to the end of the 5th century BC (La Tène A2), but there is no further information as to the context of the grave. The same is true for Overasselt, where a small bronze *situla* was found that had been used as an urn and was accompanied by a bronze cup, horse gear and spearheads or arrowheads. More is known about the finds at Wijshagen-De Rieten and Sittard, where early Middle Iron Age graves with bronze vessels were part of larger urnfields. At Wijshagen, in Belgian Limburg, no less that three graves of an incompletely investigated Early Iron Age and Middle Iron Age cemetery contained a bronze *cista* or *situla*. In all cases these were used as a container for cremated remains. A ^{14}C date of charcoal found in one of the vessels gave a date between 410 and 200 BC, but the excavator assumes that the interments took place in the first part of the 4th century BC, slightly later than those at Eigenbilzen.[91] Finally, in a recent salvage excavation of an urnfield in Sittard-Hoogveld, the fragmentary remains of a bronze *cista* were found in an otherwise unremarkable grave.[92] Although barely enough of the vessel was preserved to reconstruct form and type and to date it to 450-375 BC, this find suggests that such bronze vessels were possibly more common in urnfields than is generally assumed.

The Middle Iron Age and earlier Late Iron Age (5th century BC - circa 100 BC)

The burial practices that replaced the urnfield traditions are still little known, and the number of graves that can be confidently dated to the period 400-100 BC is quite small (fig. 4.8; table 4.3). The basic elements of the burial ritual remained the same: cremation of the body, followed by the collection of a selection of the cremated remains and burial of these in a small pit. It became increasingly rare to place the cremated remains in an urn, although this appears to have varied according to local customs. More often

[90] Because of the transitional nature of the 5th century with regard to burial practices, appendix 2 and table 4.3 do not represent two groups that are completely separate chronologically. Middle Iron Age cemeteries that have an earlier component, or that belong to the Urnfield tradition (e.g., because of the presence of round and square peripheral ditches), have been included in the list of urnfields in appendix 2. Those for which a link with the urnfield period could not be established are listed in table 4.3. As a result of the incomplete excavation of most cemeteries, this division is slightly arbitrary.

[91] Van Impe 1998, 18-19. The ^{14}C date (2308±42 BP) is an average of two dates: IRPA 844 (2300±55 BP) and IRPA 843 (2320±65 BP). Calibrated with 1σ this indicates a date between 410 and 360 cal BC, with 2σ a date between 410 and 200 cal BC.

[92] Tol 2000, 109-115.

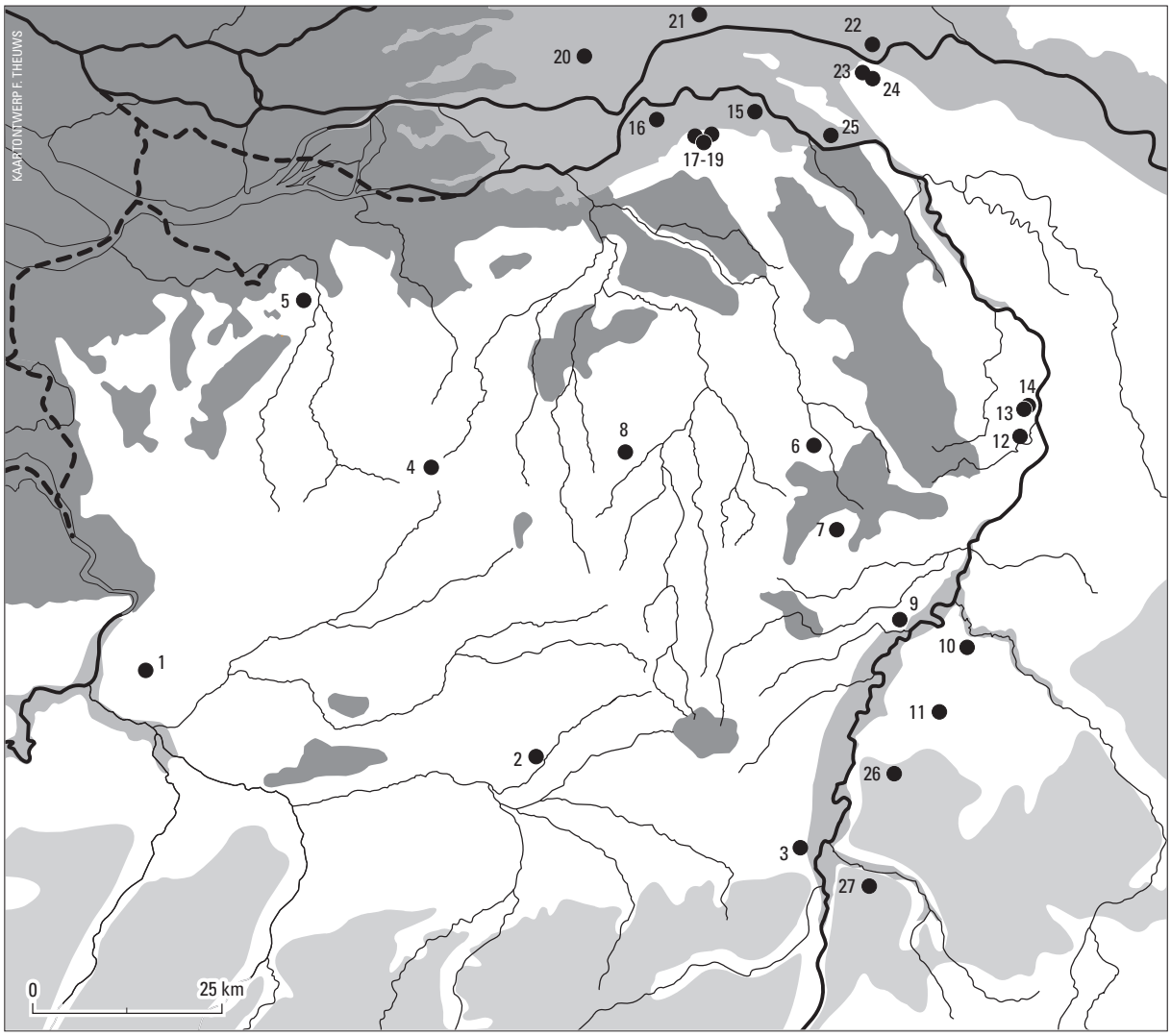

Fig. 4.8 Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region. Distribution of Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age cemeteries and isolated graves. The numbers refer to table 4.3.

than before, charred bone fragments are included in a concentration of pyre remains, together with charcoal, ashes and fragments of artefacts that burned on the pyre. In some cases a square or round ditch surrounds the grave, suggesting a low mound, but more common are small pits without a trace of an above-ground marker.

Grave goods are not frequently included with the graves, although this picture may be exaggerated by the fact that many of the graves are chance finds and have not always been properly excavated and recorded. Potsherds and miniature vessels occur, and La Tène-period bronze bracelets and fibulae are reported from several graves.[93] Glass bracelets, mostly melted on the pyre, are fairly common in Late Iron Age graves. Iron spearheads and arrowheads have been found in a dispersed group of Middle Iron Age graves at Nijmegen-Kops Plateau (table 4.4). At another location in Nijmegen, Traianusplein, a burial in a group of five graves contained cremated remains and the iron nave hoops, tyre hoops and felloe-joins

[93] Bracelets for example at Koningsbosch, Wessem and Elst-Brienenshof.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Hove-Boechoutsesteenweg	BAn		MIA or LIA	oval ditched structure (17 x 13,5 m) around cremated remains; MIA/LIA pottery in ditch; near pit with Marne-style ceramics	Verhaert 2001
2	Lummen-Meldert	BLg		MIA	area 1: 8 cremation graves aruond circular ditch (diam. 20 m); area 2: small circular ditch with opening	Creemers 1996
3	Neerharen-Rekem	BLg	c	MIA/LIA	13 cremation burials: 5 graves early MIA (100m from urnfield), 8 graves LIA, bronze fibula, glass bracelet (LT D); near LIA settlement traces	De Boe 1986
4	Ravels-Klein Ravels	BAn	c	MIA?/LIA?	14 ditched rectilinear and circular structures (with openings); graves not preserved; iron axe in ditch; directly N of Iron Age settlement remains	Verhaert/Annaert 2000
5	Breda-Emerakker	NBr	c	MIA?/LIA?	2 clusters of square and rounded peripheral ditches with SE openings. Among Iron Age settlement traces. Graves not preserved	Van Hoof et al. 1997
6	Someren-Waterdael	NBr	c	MIA or LIA	3 cremation burials, isolated from urnfield, among MIA/LIA settlement traces	Kortlang 1999
7	Weert-Klein Leuken	NLg	c	LIA	3 dispersed cremation burials among LIA houses	Tol 1998b
8	Knegsel-De Beemd	NBr	c	MIA/LIA	5 square grave monuments	Verwers/Kortlang 1983
9	Wessem	NLg		LIA	21 cremation graves, no peripheral structures; 5 with urn, slingbullets, 2 fibulae, 2 bronze bracelets	Louwe Kooijmans/ Smits 1985, 165-167; Willems 1986, 223-224
10	St.-Odiliënberg-Berkenallee/Neliske	NLg		LIA	isolated cremation burial (C14: Utc 2640: 1980± 50 BP)	Wansleeben/Verhart 1993, 309-313
11	Koningsbosch	NLg		LIA	ill-defined pit with charcoal and cremation, bronze bracelet (2nd c. BC)	Stoepker 1990b, 206
12	Blerick-Zaarderheike	NLg	h	LIA	several cremation burials, 2 with urns, 1 LT glass bracelet	Stoepker 1991b, 210
13	Grubbenvorst-Veegteschhof	NLg		LIA or ERP	5 cremation burials, possibly some (peripheral) ditches	Willems 1983, 241-242
14	Grubbenvorst-Groot Boller industrial zone	NLg		LIA	4 cremation burials among LIA settlement traces 1 grave with urn, burnt lugged bowl, 1 grave with burnt bowl	Stoepker 1990a, 185
15	Deursen	NBr		MIA?	possible cremation burials among MIA settlement traces	Verwers 1990b, 177
16	Lith	NBr		LIA	concentration charred human bone and pottery in ploughed field	Verwers 1993, 201
17	Oss-Kraaijenest	NBr	c	LIA?	cluster of 3 square and 2 round peripheral ditches; no graves preserved, near undated peripheral ditch of grave? monument, 16 m diameter; ditch with interruptions	Fokkens 1993; Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 59
18	Oss-Mettegeupel	NBr	c	MIA	1 square ditch , close to MIA farmhouses	Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 73
19	Oss-Schalkskamp	NBr	c	LIA	isolated cremation burial in urn, circular ditch, with LIA farmstead inside ditch and bank enclosure	Fokkens 1991b
20	Geldermalsen	NGl		MIA	cemetery of 16 cremation and 7 inhumation burials, two torques, bracelets, knife	Hulst 1999
21	Kesteren (between Nedereindsestraat and Fruitstraat)	NGl		LIA	cremation burial in dish, near Iron Age settlement traces	Hulst 1971, 36-37
22	Nijmegen-Lent (Laauwikstraat-zuid)	NGl	o	MIA	4 inhumation burials, 4 or 5 cremation burials; neck ring, male with earrings and hair-rings	Van den Broeke 1999
23	Nijmegen-Trajanusplein	NGl	o	MIA	5 cremation burials, no peripheral ditches; 1 grave with spearheads, horse gear and parts of 2-wheeled cart	Bloemers 1986
24	Nijmegen-Kops Plateau	NGl	o	MIA	10 cremation burials, 5 with arrowheads and spearheads; among MIA settlement traces	Fontijn/Cuypers 1999
25	Ewijk	NGl		LIA	isolated cremation burials	Willems 1986
26	Sittard-Hoogveld	NLg	o	LIA	22 LIA graves among EIA/early MIA urnfield; iron rings, iron brooches, amber bead, bronze fragments	Tol 2000
27	Valkenburg-Vroenhof	NLg		MIA/LIA	18 cremation burials, no peripheral structures, glass bracelet, iron fragments	Bloemers 1975
	Elst-Homoet	NGl		MIA	single cremation burial with bowl (Marne style), bronze fragment	Modderman/ Montfort 1991, 151
	Elst-Brienenshof	NGl	o	MIA or LIA	several cremation burials, 1 grave with 2 bronze bracelets	Hulst 1990, 190
	Maurik-Eck en Wiel	NGl		MIA or LIA	4 cremation burials, no peripheral ditches, 1 miniature vessel, bronze fragment	Hulst 1989
	Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden	NUt		MIA/LIA	cremation burials, 5 C14 dates	Hessing/Steenbeek 1990

Table 4.3 Post-urnfield period cemeteries and isolated graves (ca. 400-100BC). Lower part of the table lists parallels from areas bordering on the MDS region. 1) number on fig. 4.8; 2) name of village and location; 3) country, province (B: Belgium; N: Netherlands; Br: Brabant; Lg: Limburg; Gl: Gelderland; Ut: Utrecht); 4) premodern landscape (h: heathland, c: medieval arable land, o: other); 5) date of cemetery; 6) description; 7) references.

site	assemblage	date	references
Eigenbilzen	ribbed bronze *cista*, bronze wine jugs, goldfoil of drinking horn, bronze ring; vessel used as urn	(EIA)/MIA (Ha D3/LT A)	De Laet 1979, 555-557; Kimmig 1983; Mariën 1987
Wijshagen-De Rieten	1) ribbed bronze *cista*, iron horse gear, *phalerae*; 2) bronze *situla*, burnt bronze and iron jewellery; 3) bronze *situla*; vessels used as urns	MIA (LT A)	Van Impe/Creemers 1991; Van Impe 1998
Haps-Kamps Veld	iron *antenna* dagger, 3 arrowheads, needle (grave 190)	EIA/MIA (Ha D2/LT A)	Verwers 1972
Someren-Waterdael	1) 3 iron arrowheads (grave 6); 2) dagger fragments (grave 175)	1) EIA (Ha D); 2) MIA (LT A, 500-450)	Kortlang 1999
Sittard-Hoogveld	ribbed *cista*, iron ring, bronze needle, potsherds, iron rivet, pig mandible fragment; vessel used as urn	MIA (450-350)	Tol 2000
Overasselt	bronze *situla*, bronze cup, horse gear, 3 arrow/spearheads; vessel used as urn	MIA (5th c.)	De Laet 1979, 479
Nijmegen-Traianusplein	parts of 2-wheeled wagon, horse gear, lancehead, arrow/spearheads	MIA (450-350)	Bloemers 1986
Nijmegen-Kops Plateau	5 graves with iron arrow/spearheads (total 15)	MIA	Fontijn 1995; Fontijn/Cuijpers 1999, fig 2

Table 4.4 Middle Iron Age 'rich' graves (within urnfields and as isolated graves). The lower part includes relevant finds from outside the MDS region.

of a two-wheeled cart, together with a spearhead, arrowhead and horse gear. None of the grave goods showed traces of fire, and they probably did not accompany the dead person on the pyre. This grave has been dated to the later 5th or earlier 4th century BC.[94]

The most dramatic difference between the Urnfield period burial customs and those of the Middle and Late Iron Age is not recognisable from individual graves, but from the location of graves vis-à-vis other graves. In contrast to previous centuries, the locations of graves are much more dispersed. Whereas urnfields typically consist of tens or hundreds of burials, later burial grounds contain usually only a handful and never more than a few dozen graves. Single, isolated burials occur as well. Some of the largest burial places come from Dutch Limburg: 18 burials at Valkenburg-Vroenhof and 21 at an incompletely investigated cemetery in Wessem. Together with the lack of monumentality of individual graves, the small size of these clusters would have resulted in a much more modest visual effect.

Some elements that explain our poor understanding of the post-Urnfield period burial practices are clear: few urns and grave goods, and dispersed burial locations. With respect to this last point, it has to be considered whether we may be overlooking an unknown number of Middle and Late Iron Age graves within the urnfields. In many of the urnfields dating to the later part of the Early Iron Age, urns are rarely used, and there is a considerable number of graves that do not contain easily datable artefacts. Could those represent a continuation of the urnfields into the Middle and Late Iron Age, and therefore (in contrast to what was stated above) a continuation of communal urnfield traditions that have hitherto not been recognised? As my concern here is primarily with cemeteries and ancestors as potential media for the self-definition of communities, this question is not without importance. The recently excavated urnfield at Sittard-Hoogveld, in the loess-zone of Dutch Limburg and just to the southeast of the MDS region proper is relevant here. The urnfield was founded around 800 BC. There is a group of large burial monuments with peripheral structures, surrounded by about 80 graves without a peripheral structure. Among the Urnfield-period graves, and in appearance no different from them, a small group of graves was encountered that contained grave goods such as brooches and pottery that dated them to the beginning

[94] Bloemers 1986.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Maaseik	BLg		LIA/ERP	30 cremation burials with late LT pottery in Gallo-Roman cemetery	Janssens 1977
Mierlo-Hout-Snippenscheut	NBr	c	LIA/ERP	cemetery overlying EIA urnfield, adjacent to ditched enclosure; square grave monuments	Roymans/Tol 1993; Tol 1999
Oss-Ussen	NBr	c	LIA/ERP	LIA cremation burials in RP cemetery	Van den Sanden 1998c; Hessing in Wesselingh 2000, 186
Roermond-Maasnielderweg	NLg		LIA/ERP	LIA cremation burial in RP cemetery	Stoepker 1991a, 255
Weert-Molenakkerdreef	NLg	c	LIA/ERP	LIA cremation burials in ERP cemetery	Hiddink 1996
Wijshagen-Plokrooi	BLg		LIA/ERP	small cemetery adjacent to ditched enclosure; square grave monuments	Creemers/Van Impe 1992
Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden	NUt	o	LIA/ERP	cremation burials, 7 square, 2 circular ditches, 15 flat graves, among and near LIA/ERP farmsteads	Van Es 1994a, fig 17

Table 4.5 Late Iron Age cemeteries which continued into the Roman period. 1) name of village and location; 2) country, province; 3) premodern landscape; 4) date of cemetery; 5) description; 6) references. Cf. table 4.3 for abbreviations.

of the Late Iron Age.[95] The absence of sufficient dating evidence does not completely rule out the possibility that there was continuity between the urnfield and the later graves. I would argue, however, that even if Sittard presents an example of an urnfield continuing into the Late Iron Age, it is a case of the exception proving the rule that practically all urnfields went out of use in the beginning of the Middle Iron Age. What Sittard shows is that, even though datable artefacts are not very common in Middle and Late Iron Age graves, within a cemetery as a whole there are always bound to be enough finds that betray the presence of a post-Urnfield period component.

A phenomenon of the Middle Iron Age which has become recognised only in recent years is the occasional appearance of inhumation burials. At Someren, a single inhumation grave occurs in the youngest section of the urnfield. An accessory vessel showing influences of the French *Marne* culture dates the grave to the late 5th or early 4th century BC.[96] Two other burial places with inhumation burials, Nijmegen-Lent and Geldermalsen, are small cemeteries with a mixture of inhumation and cremation burials. They are also dated to the beginning of the Middle Iron Age,[97] but their small size and the lack of peripheral ditches place them outside the urnfield tradition. Grave goods in the inhumation burials at Geldermalsen (an iron and a bronze torc, *Marne*-influenced pottery, as well as a rim sherd of an imported vessel), and the fact of inhumation itself point to cultural affiliations with northern France.[98]

The later Late Iron Age and the earliest Roman period (circa 100 BC-AD 50)

From the later part of the Late Iron Age onwards a new phase of communal cemeteries occurred (table 4.5), although there are isolated graves and small clusters of graves that date to the Early Roman period.[99] Once again, extended concentrations of tens or hundreds of graves are found, which span periods

95 Tol 2000, 131-139.

96 Kortlang 1999, 150.

97 Van den Broeke 1999, 27 (where – in the absence of ^{14}C dates at the time of writing – a Bronze Age date is proposed); Hulst 1999, 44-45.

98 Hulst 1999, 45-48.

99 Given their often incomplete excavation it is likely that many more Roman period cemeteries include graves that date to the Late Iron Age. Moreover, it is often difficult to date graves that do not contain datable material or only handmade pottery of the Late Iron Age to Roman period transition. Cf. Hiddink in prep.

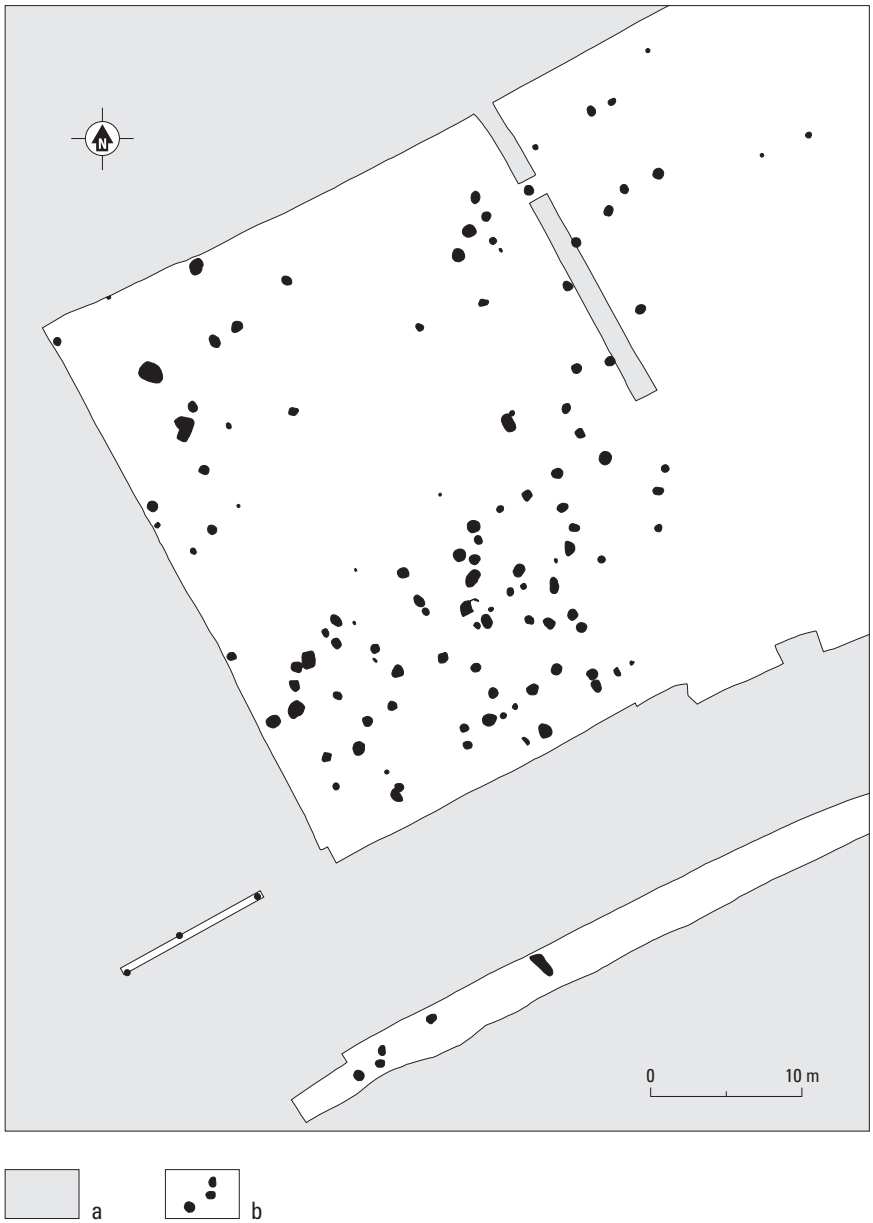

Fig. 4.9 Weert-Molenakkerdreef. Late Iron Age and Roman-period cremation cemetery with flat graves. After Hiddink 1996, fig. 3.1. a) not excavated; b) cremation burials in pits.

of one to several centuries. The beginning of this trend is not easy to pinpoint, as it is often not clear to what extent the burial place was intended as a communal cemetery from the outset or started as a small cluster of Late Iron Age graves, which did not become the focus of a larger burial ground until the Roman period. If the earliest dates of these cemeteries are used, for example from Mierlo-Hout and Weert-Molenakkerdreef (fig. 4.9), then a beginning in the 2nd century BC is possible.[100]

There appears to be a considerable degree of local variation within the MDS region, and at the present state of research it is hard to make generalisations.[101] Some trends are discernible, however. Cremation

[100] Tol 1999, 88; Hiddink 1996, 24.

[101] Hiddink 1996, 21-23; idem in prep.

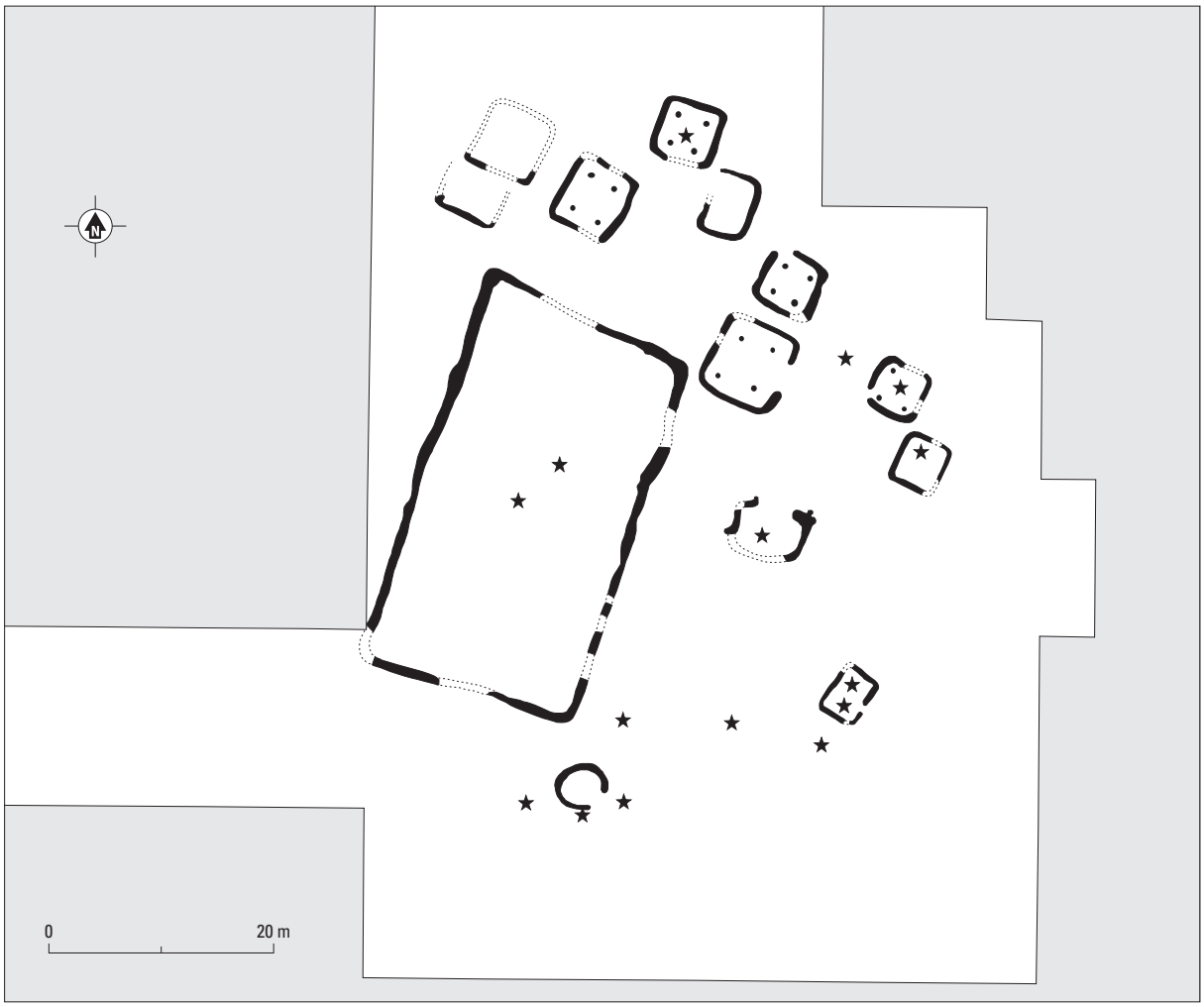

Fig. 4.10 Wijshagen-Plokrooi. Late Iron Age and Early Roman period cemetery with rectangular enclosure. After Creemers/Van Impe 1992, fig. 5.

and burial in a small pit (usually without an urn) remained the norm. At a few sites, the practice of surrounding the burial pit with a peripheral ditch became more common once again, such as at Oss-Ussen and Mierlo-Hout. At the same time, there are others –Weert-Molenakkerdreef being the best investigated example – where graves with peripheral ditches are absent or make up a very small minority.[102]

Another element at several of these cemeteries is the presence of a large rectilinear ditched structure as part of the cemetery. A monument at Mierlo-Hout consisted of a ditch, probably with a bank on the inside, surrounding an area of 85 by 21 metres. No contemporary graves were found in the interior, but nearby square grave monuments dating to the Late Iron Age to Roman period transition and two cremation graves found in the fill of the ditch suggest that this monument was closely associated with the adjacent cemetery.[103] The founding of this cemetery has been dated to ca. 150 BC.[104] A similar rectilinear monument associated with a cemetery of the Late Iron Age and early Roman period was found at

[102] Hiddink 1996. This differentiated pattern continued into the 2nd and 3rd century AD (Hiddink 1998, 47-49, fig. 3.7).

[103] Roymans/Tol 1993, 50-51, fig. 9.

[104] Tol 1999, 88. This cemetery was laid out over an urnfield of the period 750-450 BC.

Wijshagen-Plokrooi (34/36,5 by 20 m, fig. 4.10). Here there were two burial pits near the centre of the monuments. Pottery and iron fibulae in one of these graves and potsherds in the ditch of the monument indicate that this monument constitutes the oldest element of the cemetery and dates to the Late Iron Age (probably 1st century BC).[105] While square and rectangular peripheral ditches around graves are a common feature of Roman period cemeteries, the exceptional size of the monuments argues against a straightforward interpretation as grave monuments.[106] A relationship to cult practices associated with burial rituals needs to be considered in these cases, and in this light it is interesting to note that several scholars have suggested a relationship between cult places of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age and burial monuments.[107] This will be discussed in more detail in section 4.3.

4.2.3 BURIAL IN CEMETERIES AND ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF TREATING THE DEAD

In many societies, the treatment at death of new-born infants and small children often differs from the treatment of older persons, both in the manner and location of burial. Ethnographic cases of this practice are usually interpreted as resulting from the view that very small children do not yet have a social persona of their own, and their death therefore does not affect the larger society.[108] By analogy, a similar interpretation is commonly given for the under-representation of infants in prehistoric and early historic cemeteries. It is the same for the prehistoric barrows and urnfields of the MDS region, where analyses of cremated remains indicate that even though infants are not absent, they occur in numbers that are far lower than is to be expected on the basis of mortality rates of small children in pre-modern societies.[109] Which alternative treatments dead infants were given can only be guessed at: inhumation inside or outside the boundaries of the cemeteries (in which case the bones would have disappeared), exhumation, deposition in wet contexts, or any number of possibilities.

The under-representation of infants in cemeteries does not seriously affect demographic reconstructions that are based on cemetery evidence, nor – if the above interpretation of a yet-to-be established social persona holds true – is it likely to have affected the way the cemetery was viewed either as a communal cemetery or as a cemetery for a selection of the population. But the fact that cultural rules applied as to who was or was not to be included in a cemetery does raise questions as to whether there are periods when only a specific segment of the population was buried in archaeologically visible ways, and if so, what alternative treatments of the dead occurred.

This problem has been addressed by several people studying the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age mortuary practices in the Netherlands, and it appears that only 10 to 15% of the population was buried in a primary or secondary grave in a barrow.[110] A small number of flat graves have been found, but it is unclear whether those represent the predominant manner of burial of the remainder of the population. It is generally assumed that in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age the great majority of the population of the sandy regions of the Netherlands was buried in urnfield cemeteries.[111] Accepting this assumption has

105 Creemers/Van Impe 1992; idem 1993.

106 Hiddink in prep.

107 Slofstra/Van der Sanden 1987; Van der Sanden 1998c; Fontijn 2002a.

108 Ucko 1969, 270-271.

109 A commonly assumed child mortality range is 45-65% (Caselitz 1986, 167-172; Hessing 1989, 327; Roymans 1999, 77).

110 Lohof 1991, 252a-256; E.M. Theunissen 1993, 40.

111 Kooi 1979; Verlinde 1985, 325; Fokkens 1997a, 363-364; idem 1998, 118; Theunissen 1999, 86. There is a clear contrast with the coastal regions in the western and northern parts of the Netherlands, where larger cemeteries dating to the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age are unknown (e.g. Texel, Woltering 2000).

two significant consequences. First, it determines to a great extent the outcome of demographic calculations, which cannot be checked against the settlement evidence. Second, it has consequences for the interpretation of cemeteries as focal points for local communities; a cemetery containing a specific selection of the population may have been perceived differently than a cemetery for all members of a community. Therefore, even though the assumption is difficult to verify, it is important to briefly consider its basis and tenability.

It should be noted first of all that within the relatively small group of urnfields of which the cremated remains have been analysed with up-to-date methods there are no indications that a selection was made with regard to the age and sex of the people buried.[112] With the exception of the under-representation of infants and small children, there usually appears to be a certain degree of demographic balance. There is no consistent pattern of overrepresentation of female or male juveniles and adults which could suggest a selection, although it should be borne in mind that the percentage for which a sex determination is possible is usually small.

Another, but admittedly problematic, indication for the idea that a large majority of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age population was buried in urnfields stems from the absence of indications for alternative practices of treating the dead. Human remains are rarely found outside the urnfields. There are a few possible instances of isolated Early Iron Age burials found in the vicinity of farmhouses (cf. table 3.9). Undoubtedly, this category is underrepresented in excavation reports, but there are no reasons to assume that burying the dead in or around houses was a practice chosen for a significant part of the population in the Urnfield period. The deposition of human remains in rivers and peat bogs can also be considered as an alternative to burial in a formal cemetery. There are a fair number of examples known in the Netherlands, even though their serious study has only recently begun.[113] In one sizeable collection of human bones dredged from the Meuse river along the northern border of the MDS region there was no positive evidence for Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age human depositions among the sample of radiocarbon-dated bones, but in a larger northwest European context, the practice has been attested for many periods from the Late Neolithic onwards.[114] In all, it cannot be ruled out that the population of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cemeteries represents a particular selection of the population, but in the absence of indications for this, it can be assumed that the majority of the population is represented.

The situation is quite different for the Middle and Late Iron Age, for which there are no known cemeteries of any considerable size. As argued above, the missing burials of these periods are not all hiding among the urnfield graves. Nor is it solely a matter of a drastic decrease in the population, since large-scale excavations at sites like Oss, Haps and Someren have yielded ample settlement remains and scarce funerary remains of the same period. This leaves us with two possible explanations: first, the great majority of the population was buried in inconspicuous, dispersed graves, but their remains have not been preserved or archaeologists have not learned to recognise them, or second, only a minority of the population was selected for cremation and burial in an archaeologically visible manner, and alternative ways of treating the dead came into vogue as well. My feeling is that there is a combination of factors involved.

[112] Wijk bij Duurstede: Hoogland in Hessing 1989, 321-325; Beegden: Hoogland in Roymans 1999, 74-76; Mierlo-Hout: Tol 1999, 105-109; Someren: Kortlang 1999, 163-167; Roermond: Schabbink/Tol 2000; Sittard: Tol 2000. Against this argument it can be said that such an apparent demographic balance also occurs in the Middle Bronze Age, a period in which only a small selection of the population was buried in archaeologically visible ways.

[113] Van der Sanden 1990b; idem 1996 (on peat bodies); Ter Schegget 1999 (on river finds).

[114] Ter Schegget 1999, 202, table 1.

The picture is possibly partly the result of a decrease in population size, and is certainly negatively reinforced by the poor visibility of graves. But it is also likely that the whole population was no longer buried in ways that we can easily trace. Several, difficult to demonstrate, alternative treatments of the dead can be suggested. It is possible that inhumation burials are a more common feature than has hitherto been assumed. As mentioned above, inhumation graves dating to the Middle Iron Age do sometimes occur in combination with cremation graves. In the riverine zone to the north of the MDS region, where Geldermalsen and Nijmegen-Oosterhout are located, the chances of survival of uncharred bone are higher than in the sandy landscapes. One could speculate that many inhumation burials without grave goods and completely disintegrated skeletal remains are overlooked in excavations. Secondly, the deposition of human remains in rivers and peat moors may have increased. Again, the evidence for this is tenuous, and so far only consists of the skeletal parts of the Late Iron Age that have been dredged up from the Meuse river. The evidence there suggests, however, that those human remains do not represent ordinary deaths and burials, but rather that we are dealing with a specific ritual context associated with martiality and warfare.[115] In addition to a predominance of adult males and the frequent occurrence of weaponry, this is demonstrated by fifteen skulls and other bones that showed severe and lethal injuries from swords, daggers, axes, arrows and spears.[116] Thirdly, one can think of practices such as exposure above ground, exhumation, keeping skeletal remains within houses, or simply cremation of the dead without burial of the ashes.[117] So far, evidence for these practices is rare, but there is no reason to assume in this case that the absence of evidence can be taken as evidence of absence.

For the Roman period there is less compelling reason to look for alternative ways of burying the dead. The communal cemeteries of those periods suggest, as in the Urnfield period, that the majority of the population was buried in them.[118]

4.2.4 URNFIELD CEMETERIES AND OLDER BURIAL MONUMENTS

A minority of all urnfields are spatially associated with barrows of the Late Neolithic to Middle Bronze Age (table 4.6).[119] Given the focus on barrows with visible mounds during many early excavations and the limited scale of many urnfield excavations until the 1980s, it is likely that the spatial association of urnfields and Urnfield period burials with earlier burial monuments occurred more frequently than the numbers suggest; the connection may in fact have been rather common. There are several forms of spatial association, which occur both separately and in combination with each other.

First, and most common, is the occurrence of a single Early or Middle Bronze Age barrow or a small barrow group surrounded by a Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age urnfield. A recently excavated example is Mierlo-Hout. A barrow with a ditch and a secondarily added post circle, of which the central grave was not preserved but which probably dates to the Middle Bronze Age, was found among the graves of an urnfield which was established in the 8th century BC. Second in a number of cases the Early Bronze Age or Middle Bronze Age mound itself was used for the interment of Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age urn burials. They occur both in the foot and higher up in the mound. Third, there are cases where the old barrow was more significantly altered in the Urnfield period (fig. 4.11). Sometimes a ring ditch

[115] Ter Schegget 1999, 224.

[116] Ter Schegget 1999, 215-223.

[117] Roymans 1990, 242-243 on human remains in Middle and Late Iron Age settlements; Hessing 1993 on human remains in Roman period settlements; Parker Pearson 1999a, 47-54.

[118] Hiddink in prep.

[119] This has also been recorded in the eastern (Verlinde 1985, 318) and northern Netherlands (Waterbolk 1962, 13).

no.	site	description	date	references
100	Eksel-Winner	urnfield, plus Harpstedt urn in periphery of MBA (?) barrow	EIA	De Laet 1961; Meex 1972
108	Hamont-Haarterheide	secondary burials in EBA/MBA barrows	EIA	Roosens/Beex 1965
-	Wijchmaal-Heksenberg	urn (possibly LBA/EIA) as late interment in EBA/MBA barrow; not included in urnfield table	LBA or EIA	Theunissen 1999
-	Wijshagen-Tuudsheuvel	urn (possibly LBA/EIA) as late interment in EBA/MBA barrow; not included in urnfield table	LBA or EIA	Theunissen 1999
151	Alphen-Keutelberg	urnfield around EBA barrow	LBA and/or EIA	Verhagen 1997
155	Goirle-Hoogeind	urnfield around EBA or MBA barrow	LBA/EIA	Verwers 1966c
-	Goirle-Vijfberg	urnfield period ring ditch at 380 m from MBA barrow group; not included in urnfield table	LBA and/or EIA	Van Giffen 1937
179	Oss-Vorstengraf	EIA barrow with situla grave erected over smaller early-MBA mound; EIA graves in vicinity	EIA	Holwerda 1934; Jansen/Fokkens 1999; Fokkens/Jansen in prep.
180	Berghem-Zevenbergen	EBA or MBA barrow with EIA urn interment; near urnfield	EIA	Verwers 1966b
196	Haps-Kamps Veld	urnfield around MBA barrows; H4 and H1 reused for EIA interments; post circle H2 cut away by ditch with EIA/MIA vessel in ditch; H5 cut by a-central EIA circular ditch	EIA/MIA	Verwers 1972
215	Nuenen-Haneven	urnfield around MBA barrows	LBA/EIA	Hermans 1865; Beex 1969a
220	Mierlo-Hout-Snippenscheut	urnfield around MBA barrow	EIA/MIA	Tol 1999
239	Veldhoven-Toterfout-Halve Mijl	urnfield near EBA/MBA barrow group	EIA	Glasbergen 1954; E.M. Theunissen 1993; idem 1999
242	Veldhoven-Heibloem	urnfield around EBA barrow; barrow used for EIA interment	LBA/EIA	Modderman/Louwe Kooijmans 1966
243	Knegsel-Huismeer	urnfield over and around MBA barrows	EIA	Beex 1952a; Hijszeler 1952; Theunissen 1999
245	Knegsel-Knegselse Hei	five MBA barrows incorporated in urnfield	LBA	Braat 1936
254	Riethoven-Boshoven	LN barrow used for secondary interments, urnfield around barrow	LBA/EIA	Slofstra 1977
268	Hapert/Eersel (mun. border)	urnfield around 4 (EBA) or MBA barrows	EIA	Beex 1964a; idem 1964b
275	Hoogeloon-Honshoef	urnfield close to 'Zwartenberg' (MBA ditch and bank barrow); IA (?) circular ditch in top of Zwartenberg	LBA and/or EIA	Beex 1964b; 1970e
277	Hoogeloon-Kattenberg	urnfield around EBA/MBA barrows	LBA and/or EIA	Modderman 1955b; Beex 1964b
278	Hoogeloon-Hoogpoort	urnfield around LN or BA barrows	MIA	Modderman 1960/61a; Beex 1964b
279	Hoogeloon; E border of municipality	urnfield around EBA or MBA barrows	LBA and/or EIA	Beex 1964b
-	Bergeijk-Hoge Berkt	small circular ditches around EBA barrow; disturbed cremated remains; not included in urnfield table		Modderman 1955b
315	Meerlo-Sint Goarkapel	urnfield around LN barrow; later peripheral ditches cut in top of LN barrow	EIA	Verwers 1966a
343	Helden-Koningslust	urnfield around EBA or MBA barrow	EIA	Theunissen 1999
363	Neer-Boshei	urnfield in direct vicinity of earlier barrow	EIA	Harsema 1973; Theunissen 1999
293	Nijmegen-Kops Plateau	urnfield around MBA barrows and stone platforms	LBA/EIA	Fontijn/Cuypers 1999
294	Nijmegen-Hunerberg	urnfield surrounding LN/EBA/MBA barrows; EIA urn in barrow VII	LBA/EIA	Louwe Kooijmans 1973
-	Wijk bij Duurstede	urnfield around natural (?) circular mound, surrounded by ditch in MBA, possibly used as barrow	EIA	Hessing 1989

Table 4.6 Urnfields of the Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and early Middle Iron Age which were erected in the direct vicinity of earlier mortuary monuments. The numbers refers to the catalogue of urnfields in appendix 2.

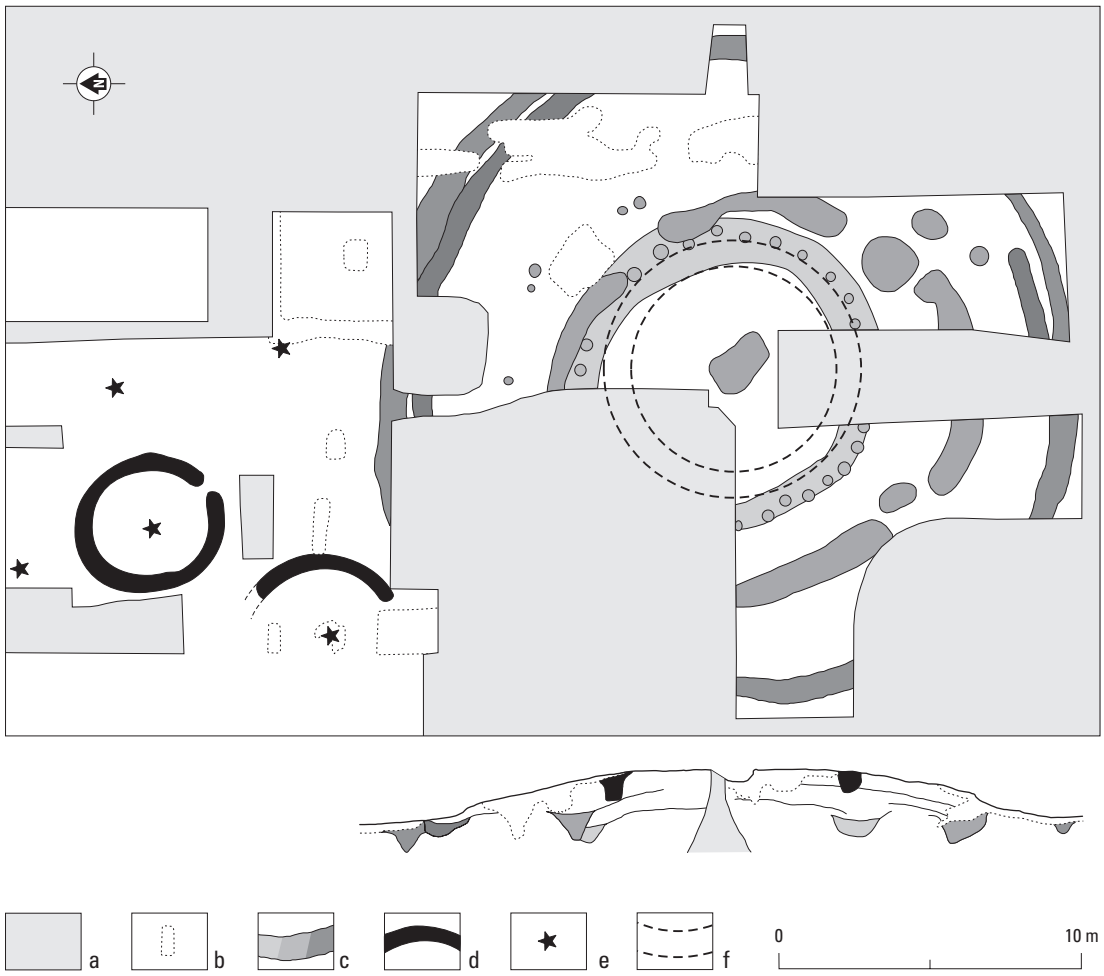

Fig. 4.11 Meerlo. Barrow with phases of use from the Late Neolithic to the Urnfield period, and Early Iron Age graves of adjacent urnfield. After Verwers 1966a, fig. 2. a) not excavated; b) recent disturbance; c) ditch of barrow monument (Late Neolithic-Bronze Age); d) ditch of Early Iron Age grave monument; e) cremation burial; f) Iron Age ditch in top of barrow (black in profile).

was dug around the top of an old mound, sometimes around its base. On a few occaisons an old barrow appears to have been incorporated into a round or long barrow. Examples are the 'Vorstengraf ' near Oss and the 'Knegselse Hei' urnfield at Knegsel (fig. 4.12). Renewed investigations of the Halltstatt C situla grave at Oss have demonstrated that the mound was erected over a much smaller earlier mound (probably Middle Bronze Age), and partly over a double row of posts which the excavators assume may have formed an entry passage to a Late Bronze Age grave.[120] At Knegsel, a group of five barrows, each surrounded by double and multiple post-circles were reused in the Late Bronze Age. New peripheral ditches were dug into the barrow remains, often slightly off-centre, but not in such a random way that it is likely that the old barrow had completely disappeared. In two cases the rounded end of a ditch of a long barrow went around and over a mound with a post-circle.

In the case of Urnfield-period burials being placed in Bronze Age barrows, it could be argued that they represent a continuation of a practice of secondary burial that had become increasingly common in

[120] Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 89.

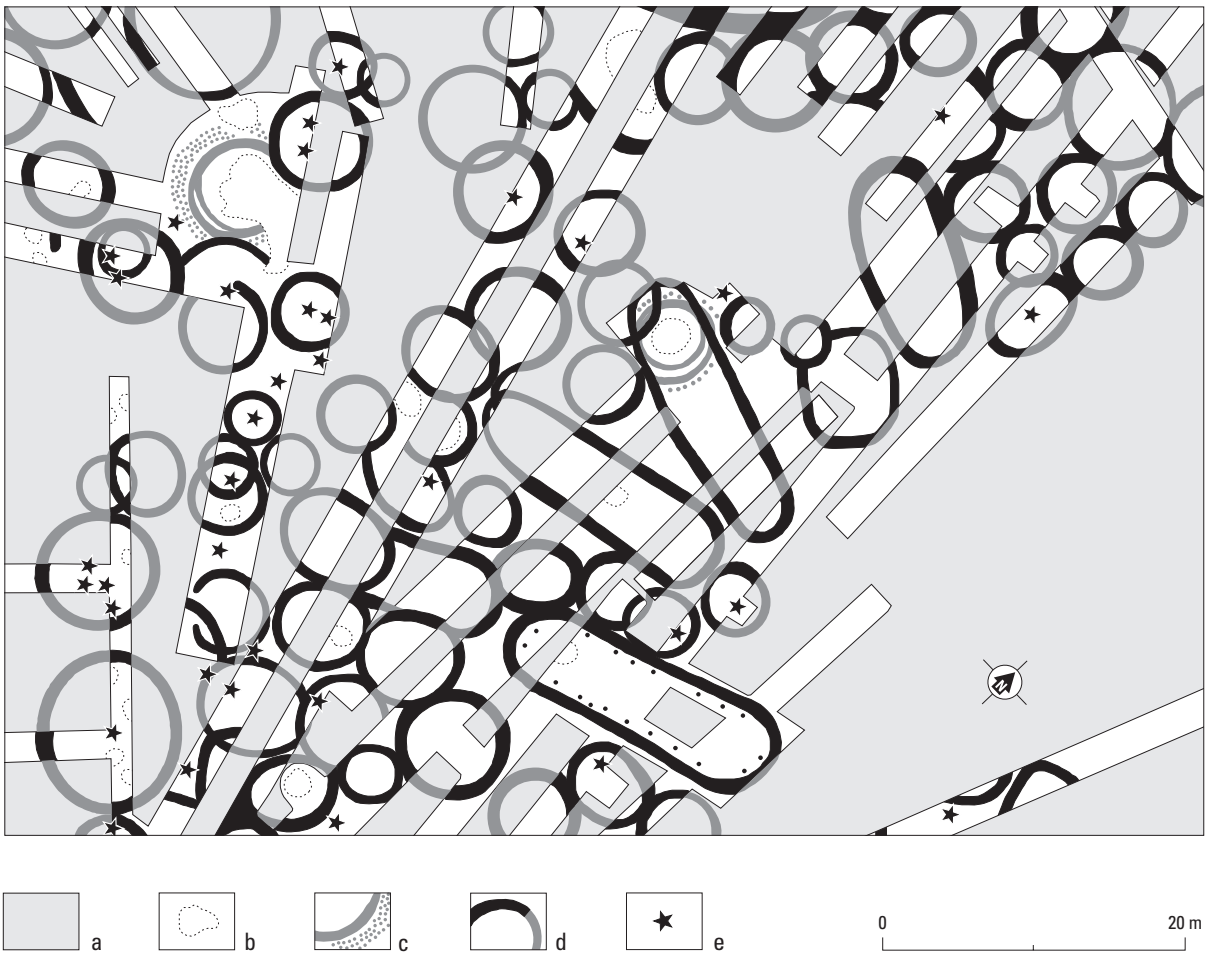

Fig. 4.12 Knegsel-Knegselse Hei. Section of urnfield, incorporating Middle Bronze Age barrows. After Braat 1936, fig. 25. a) not excavated; b) recent disturbance; c) Middle Bronze Age grave monument; d) Urnfield period grave monument (reconstructed in grey); e) cremation burial.

the second part of the Middle Bronze Age.[121] But continuity of use should not be assumed too quickly, given the fact that in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age it was much more common to create a new mound for each individual grave. Moreover, there are sometimes indications that a barrow was reused only after many centuries without signs of activity at the site. The same is true for urnfields around older barrows, which usually appear to have been founded at least several centuries after the last Middle Bronze Age burial rituals had taken place. Continuity is in fact rarely suggested by the evidence.

Several explanations can be proposed for these spatial associations. One is that the renewed use of a location as a burial place is entirely coincidental, or at least not related to the former phase of funerary use. If the mounds were no longer recognised as burial mounds, it is possible that people returned by chance to the same place after several centuries to bury their dead. Another explanation is that the old mound or mounds were recognised as prominent features in the landscape and chosen as a burial ground for that reason, without actually being recognised as burial mounds. A third possibility is that even after many centuries the mounds were still recognised as barrows and the new burial ground was purposely

[121] Theunissen 1999, 85-86.

founded near or above them. Clearly, there is no reason to assume that all known cases have the same background. In some cases a completely coincidental return to the same spot cannot be ruled out, but the evidence – with old mounds being used for secondary interments and being incorporated in a new cemetery – does not consistently point in that direction. The evidence suggests, rather, that the place was chosen as a cemetery precisely because of its potential to refer to the existing mound or mounds.

The possibility remains that people did not actually recognise the mounds as the burial place of former inhabitants of the region, but wanted to refer to them as prominent landscape features, in the same way that one could imagine a large solitary tree being chosen as a place of burial. In those cases where there is a period of several centuries between phases of use, it is highly unlikely that any detailed memories about the earlier mounds were still passed on from generation to generation, and it certainly cannot be ruled out that the earlier mounds were no longer recognised as barrows. If modern-day archaeologists are sometimes in the dark as to whether a hillock is a wind-blown sand dune or a barrow, how could Iron Age inhabitants of the region always make that distinction?[122] As far as I know, however, there are no reported cases of small natural elevations becoming the focal point of an urnfield, or being used for 'secondary' burials,[123] which suggests that when ancient mounds were being referred to by later burial communities they were indeed recognised as ancestral burial places.

How, then, can this practice be interpreted? Did people refer to much older barrows in a negative or in a positive sense? One can begin a cemetery next to an existing burial monument out of a desire to erase and replace any ancestral connotations relating to the old barrow and any social or political claims that could be derived from such a connotation. Or, one can do it out of a desire to create a link to those connotations, and to derive some form of authority from it. Desecration is as much a form of referring to older monuments as positive appropriation is. There is very little evidence that could support a negative appreciation, however. One would expect in that case to find a more consistent pattern of barrows levelled in the Urnfield period, of new peripheral ditches being dug through existing mounds, or of barrows being destroyed by house building or agricultural activities.[124] In the few cases where Bronze Age barrows were significantly altered by the construction of a new mound or peripheral ditch, it could be argued that these are cases of incorporation rather than of destruction. Thus, in the example from Knegsel a new ditch was cut through a much earlier post-circle, and somewhat off-centre to the original centre of the mound within the post-circle (fig. 4.12). But in the centuries in between, the post-circles would probably have disappeared and the mound itself may have shifted somewhat due to wind erosion. [125] It is impossible, of course, to assess how many Bronze Age barrows were destroyed completely in the Iron Age, and this gives cause for caution, but the lack of evidence of a negative valuation of older burial monuments in the Urnfield period suggests that these were generally valued positively.

[122] Perhaps a more pertinent question is whether it really matters if prehistoric people made the same distinctions between natural and cultural features in the landscape as we do todday. Bradley (1998) has suggested that rock outcrops in south-west England were identified as ruined megalithic tombs and were linked to an ancestral past.

[123] However, there are at least two cases of Middle Bronze Age barrows that originated as small, natural elevations (Wijk bij Duurstede, Hessing 1989; Geldermalsen-De Bogen, Meijlink 2001).

[124] The situation may be different in the Late Iron Age, when there are several examples of settlements overlying urnfields. Cf. section 4.6.4.

[125] Fokkens and Jansen take the fact that the Hallstatt C situla grave at Oss-Vorstengraf was dug a-centrally into a Middle Bronze Age mound as an indication that the old central grave was deliberately avoided (Fokkens/Jansen in prep.).

In the literature dealing with the reuse of older monuments in later prehistoric and early historic times in Northwestern Europe, a common assumption is that something could be gained by referring through burial to older burial monuments.[126] In addition to the potential cosmological significance attached to a place where people had been buried in a distant past, an attraction may have been the possibility of creating a fictitious genealogical link to the long deceased. In societies which place heavy emphasis on the significance of ancestors for matters of social identity, claims to land and political authority (see below), it is easy to understand that an association with 'ancestors' from a distant past would have been valued highly.

It is striking in this respect that the practice of referring to Bronze Age burial monuments appears to have come to a complete halt with the end of the Urnfield tradition in the beginning of the Middle Iron Age. Indications for burials or other activities are absent until the final part of the Late Iron Age.[127] At a local level, this pattern is confirmed by the evidence from Nijmegen-Kops Plateau.[128] After a long period of use and reuse of the top and upper flanks of a small plateau for funerary and cultic activities, going back to the Early Bronze Age and possibly the Late Neolithic, there is a very clear break at the end of the Early Iron Age. From then on, the potential of referring to nearby burial monuments of a near and distant past was completely ignored. Instead, inconspicuous graves were placed within the settlement area. Some of these Middle Iron Age graves constitute what could in fact be called 'rich' graves and include sets of bronze and iron spearheads and arrowheads.[129] Apparently, something had changed in the way the isolated barrows of the Early Bronze Age and Middle Bronze Age were perceived and especially the way in which it was felt they could be used to support claims, legitimate authority or be a source of social identity. This suggests that what attracted people in the Urnfield period to the earlier burial monuments was specifically related to the way these could be reinterpreted and given new meaning in the context of urnfield practices. As shown above in section 4.2.2, the main difference between the Urnfield period and the burial practices of the Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age is the communal nature of the former and the individual or familial nature of the latter. I would argue therefore that the appropriation of ancient burial monuments and their ancestral connotations has to be understood in the context of the ideology behind the communal burial practices and the shared identity of the local community.

4.2.5 CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND ANCESTORS

The average size of a burial community can be calculated when both the time period during which a cemetery was used to bury people and the total number of graves at a cemetery are known.[130] The resulting figure is an average because a certain amount of fluctuation in the size of a burial community between its foundation and final dissolution has to be expected. A factor that limits the applicability of these calculations is that it only works for those cases where at least a large majority of the population is

[126] Roymans 1995a; Hiddink in prep. on the reuse of urnfields in the Roman period in the MDS region; Fontijn 1996 on the reuse of older burial monuments in the urnfield period in Nijmegen-Kops Plateau; Bradley 1987; idem 1993; Hingley 1996; Holtorf 1998; articles in Bradley/Williams (eds) 1998; Sopp 1999.

[127] The only possible exceptions to this are Hoogeloon-Hoogpoort (no. 278) and Sittard-Hoogveld (no. 387). Roymans lists native Roman cemeteries located on or near urnfields (1995a, 9, appendix 1).

[128] Fontijn 1995, 63-76 (esp. 73-76); idem 1996, 84.

[129] Fontijn 1995, 55-58; cf. table 4.4.

[130] Well-known here is Acsádi and Némeskeri's formula (1970): P = k (De)/t: the population (P) equals the number of interred persons (D) multiplied by the average life expectancy at birth (e) and divided by the duration of use of the cemetery (t), with a correction factor (k) to compensate for the under-representation of new-born children.

	percentage of group in barrow/cemetery			spatial relationships farmsteads and graves			monumentality of barrow/cemetery		
	inclusive <- - - - -> exclusive			segragation <- - -> incorporation			monumental <- - -> inconspicuous		
MBA		+++		+?+			+++		
LBA/EIA	+++			+++			+++		
MIA/early LIA		+?+			+++				+++
late LIA/ERP	+++			+++				+++	

Table 4.7 Three aspects of the relationship between local communities and their burial places.

buried in the cemetery. The number of people buried in Early and Middle Bronze Age barrows clearly does not reflect the number of people that lived in the area. In a previous section (4.2.3) it was argued that we can assume that urnfields, on the other hand, do reflect the size of the living population. Although the number of urnfields for which a sound estimate can be made of the total number of graves is small, those cemeteries consistently point to burial communities of 15 to 50 people.[131] Often these numbers are translated to domestic groups or families: three to eight groups, with the majority probably ranging between four and six groups.

An implicit assumption here is that there was no variation within families in the choice of burial place for its members. Given the roughly proportional numbers of men and women and young and old adults, this is a fair assumption.[132] It rests, however, on a more fundamental and widely held supposition, that the people included in a cemetery were in some way associated in life – hence the term burial community. There is little reason to doubt the validity of the assumption, but I would argue that we should not take it for granted. It is worth considering carefully what it means when people buried their dead together, or apart. What is the status of a burial community in relation to a local community? Are they one and the same? And if so, was the practice of burying the dead in a shared place a matter of course, an expedient result of the fact that they lived in one place, or was there more to it than that? And if so, what does it mean if there is a change from collective to dispersed cemeteries? As was argued in the introduction to this chapter, these questions are intertwined with more general issues regarding 1) the significance attached to ancestors in the society of the living, 2) the nature of social relations and kinship, and 3) resources, property, and inheritance. At this stage I will make an initial attempt only at engaging with those issues, but I will return to them at the end of this chapter and in the final chapter.

Spatial associations between the living and the dead and between the dead themselves may give some clues about the changing roles of ancestors for the living. Dimensions that can be looked at are inclusion and exclusion (i.e. among the dead), and segregation and incorporation (of the dead and the living).[133] A third category that is potentially relevant is that of the monumentality of barrows and cemeteries, i.e. the degree to which graves were constructed in such a way as to to be substantial, visible and permanent monuments in the landscape. As there are no cross-culturally valid meanings of these con-

[131] Beegden (App. 2, no. 377; 17 to 44 persons), Mierlo-Hout (no. 220; 19 to 42 persons), Someren (no. 223; 20 to 30), Weert-Raak (no. 385; ca. 36 persons). Very similar figures have been estimated for the urnfields in the eastern (Verlinde 1985, 324-325) and northern Netherlands (Kooi 1979, 147). Exceptionally large is Weert-Boshoverheide (no. 386), with a population of 66 to 88 persons (Kremer 1996, 40).

[132] Ethnographic examples also suggest other possibilities, for example that people were brought back to their native village to be buried, or to ancestral villages which had not been inhabited by a descent group for several generations.

[133] Parker Pearson 1993.

cepts, their symbolism cannot be 'read' in any straightforward way. A prehistorian's tools for understanding the symbolism involved in burial rituals and cemeteries may be limited anyway, but a step forward can be made by looking at variability and changes within a single historical and cultural context.[134] It is likely that changes in such a context reflect changes in the meanings of the dead in the world of the living.

Described in these terms, the beginning of the Urnfield period demonstrates a decreasing significance for exclusivity, a possibly increasing spatial segregation of the dead and the living, and a continued (but differently expressed) concern with monumentality (table 4.7). Whereas in the Middle Bronze Age a majority of the population was excluded from burial in a barrow, from the Late Bronze Age onwards most of the dead were buried under an individual mound, or at least within the bounds of the cemetery. Over time, as the outcome of numerous separate decisions to inter someone's cremated remains in the cemetery, this resulted in large cemeteries in which all or most of the close and further removed forebears were buried. In the Early and Middle Bronze Age more options were feasible and chosen: burial in a newly constructed mound, burial in a secondarily raised mound, in the periphery of an existing mound, in a flat grave, or - most commonly - in an archaeologically invisible manner outside formal burial places.

There are some indications that the Urnfield period represents a phase of increasing segregation of the dead from the living. The dead were only rarely buried in the vicinity of farmsteads and houses were never constructed within the domain of the cemetery. In Someren, for example, an urnfield was founded in the Early Iron Age at a distance of several hundred metres from the nearest contemporary houses.[135] Only in later centuries did the farmsteads move closer to the cemetery. At Sint-Oedenrode, a Late Bronze Age cemetery was discovered at a distance of about 100 metres from contemporary farmsteads.[136]

A concern with monumentality can be discerned for both the Middle Bronze Age and the Urnfield period. It is a type of monumentality that does not compare with that of megaliths, Roman triumphal arches or medieval cathedrals – nor should it. What makes the Bronze Age and Iron Age burial monuments monumental is the fact that they were constructed as permanent and conspicuous alterations to the landscape. In the Early and Middle Bronze Age this was done differently from the Urnfield period. In the earlier period, barrows usually occur as single features. Some of them, such as the disc-and-bell barrows, would have been quite impressive monuments. From the second part of the Middle Bronze Age onwards, barrows were erected more frequently in diffuse groups, and by the Urnfield period the monumentality of the cemeteries was less a result of the size or height of individual barrows than of the dense clustering of monuments.[137] Graves that were impressive in their own right still occurred, for example round barrows with diameters of over 20 metres and especially some of the extremely lengthy long barrows at Someren and Weert-Raak. But these were incorporated within a larger cemetery and – even if they served as founder's graves – were never meant to remain solitary features in the landscape.

The differences in exclusivity, segregation and monumentality suggest that the Middle Bronze Age to Urnfield period transition represents a transformation of the perception and significance of the dead and ancestors. Before, only a small percentage of the population was turned into an ancestor by burial under a mound, while in the Urnfield period a much larger percentage of the population became included in

134 Parker Pearson 1993, 206.

135 Kortlang 1999, fig 17.

136 Van der Sanden 1981; Van Bodegraven 1991, fig. 1.

137 Even though barrows are a dominant element of the great majority of the urnfields, there is a certain amount of local and regional variation in the importance of monumentality. Especially in the border regions of the MDS region with the loess landscapes to the south, it is not uncommon for urnfields to consist largely of flat graves, usually surrounding one or a few mounded grave monuments (Donk (no. 77); Neerpelt-Grote Heide (no. 105); Neerharen-Rekem (no. 128); Sittard (no. 387)).

the category of ancestors.[138] This may be related to complex transformations of the construction of the sociocosmic order, and the relationships between the different constituents of that order. One of the functions ascribed in the anthropological literature to burial rituals is the re-establishment of the social order of the living group.[139] Social roles, titles, names and rights that were held by the deceased have to be channelled back to and redistributed among the living. This is often given shape through ritualised exchanges that encompass several spheres of the socio-cosmic order.[140] Such exchanges recreate and reinforce social relationships within the community, but at the same time they present a pre-eminent occasion for marking a community's external social boundaries. The erection of a barrow and the presence of older barrows in the landscape would have given this form of marking social boundaries a geographically localised dimension, a dimension, moreover, that expressed permanence and immutability. One main difference between the Middle Bronze Age and the Urnfield period is that in the former this way of marking social boundaries was practised quite rarely, whereas in the Urnfield period it was a relatively frequent occurrence. Another is that in the Middle Bronze Age new locations were often selected for barrow erection, whereas in the Urnfield period it was always the same place.

A major shift occurred with the end of the use of urnfields and the burial practices associated with them. In comparison with the inclusive nature of Urnfield-period burial rituals, those of the Middle and Late Iron Age demonstrate a stronger emphasis on exclusivity. The isolated graves and small clusters of burials could suggest (assuming for the moment that this pattern is not wholly the result of post-depositional processes, see 4.2.2) that the 'normal' treatment of cremation and burial became more exclusive (table 4.7).[141] Possibly, a significant proportion of the population was buried in ways that did not leave archaeologically visible traces. As well as the exclusivity of the burial ritual, there was greater diversity in the locations chosen as burial grounds, and there are no indications that burial grounds were used for long periods of time.

After the end of the Urnfield period, the notion of segregation appears to have become less important. One form that this took was in the construction of farmhouses near or on top of older cemeteries. At Someren, the farmhouses of this period are situated much closer to the cemetery than in the Early Iron Age. The latest Iron Age and native-Roman houses found there are situated practically on the edges of the Early Iron Age graves. In Mierlo-Hout the latest phase of the cemetery, dating to the early part of the Middle Iron Age, is situated no more than 25 metres from several farmhouses that date to the Middle or Late Iron Age (fig. 4.7). Donk is another example, in which a Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age urnfield is bordered by settlement traces that begin in the Early Iron Age but which mainly date to the Middle and Late Iron Age. Stronger indications for the incorporation of the dead in the abodes of the living come from the evidence that was discussed in chapter 3.3.4 for Middle and Late Iron Age burials in farmyards. At or after the abandonment of a house the people who lived there were sometimes buried in the yard, or alternatively, people were buried there during the period of occupation. In the latter case, it is likely that interaction with the graves of direct ancestors became part of day-to-day activities, in the context of family and household. Monumentality, on the other hand, was clearly of not much impor-

[138] I am not claiming here that there was an undifferentiated category of ancestors, alongside another category of deceased that never acquired that status. Rather, within a differentiated set of ancestral notions, all but the youngest or childless deceased would have been perceived as an ancestor in some form or context, even if only by the direct descendants. It is in this sense that I use the term ancestor here.

[139] Goody 1962; Huntington/Metcalf 1979, 16; Bloch/Parry 1982, 4-5.

[140] Bazelmans 1999.

[141] 'Exclusive' is not intended to carry the notion of prestigious. In theory, the burials we find could have been the abnormal cases.

tance in Middle and Late Iron Age burial practices. Circular or square ditches became rare, and when they are present there are never any indications that they surrounded a substantial mound. More common are flat graves without indications of grave markers. There could well have been ways of marking graves that did not leave archaeologically visible traces, but these would not have had the same permanent and monumental characters as Bronze Age and Early Iron Age barrows.

The shift towards greater exclusivity, decreasing segregation and decreasing monumentality in the burial rituals suggests that the transition from the Urnfield period to the Middle Iron Age was again a period during which the roles and significance of ancestors changed. The small burial grounds with their short periods of use suggest that a burial community did not necessarily overlap with local communities. There are several possibilities here. Local communities may have existed as before, but were now divided into multiple, perhaps equally short-lived burial communities, each of which consisted of a household or family. Especially in the cases of graves in farmyards this scenario comes to mind. Alternatively, burial communities and local communities may have overlapped largely as before, but they were represented in death only by a small proportion of the population. A third possibility is that local communities as they had existed in the Urnfield period were no longer part of the social order. This would imply a drastic change in the social organisation. These matters need to be considered within a broader perspective that incorporates evidence regarding long-term settlement patterns, cult places as well as land use and land tenure practices (see sections 4.6, 6.6). At this point, however, it is clear that burial practices and ancestral monuments were not involved in the construction of local communities in the same way as they had been in the Urnfield period. This is not to say that ancestors became altogether insignificant, but it is hard to see how the burial of a person in a relatively inconspicuous grave, at a location that was not part of a formal cemetery, would have had the same lasting effect on the cohesion and shared history of the local community as it had in the previous period.

At the end of the Late Iron Age and especially in the Early Roman period, inclusion in communal cemeteries became predominant once again. There are some examples of graves near houses, but more common than in the previous period is the use of areas specifically for the disposal of the dead, separated from the settlements.[142] Within the group of Roman-period cemeteries there is no uniform pattern regarding the significance of monumentality. Hiddink observes that there are regional differences in the use of peripheral ditches.[143] The northeastern part of the MDS region and the bordering riverine region to the north are characterised by cemeteries with relatively high percentages of round and rectilinear peripheral structures, whereas to the south they are less common (with no evidence in the western part). The use of peripheral structures does not necessarily mean that grave monuments were more monumental in appearance than graves marked in another fashion, but in those cemeteries where peripheral ditches are common, there are often one or several graves as well that stand out because of their monumental character.[144] These often have diameters or sides that measure over 20 metres, and are sometimes accompanied by post settings. At the same time, there are substantial cemeteries with well over a hundred graves, for which there is a complete absence of evidence of barrows or peripheral structures. The close proximity of the graves indicates that they were not covered by a barrow.[145]

[142] Native-Roman settlements in combination with the accompanying cemeteries have been excavated at several sites: Oss-Ussen (Wesselingh 2000), Weert-Kampershoek (Roymans/Tol/Hiddink 1998), Hoogeloon (Slofstra 1991b, 150-151, figs. 12, 13). Cf. also Hiddink in prep.

[143] Hiddink 1998, 47-49.

[144] Examples of these monumental graves dating to the first century AD have been found in the cemetery of Oss-Ussen (Van der Sanden 1998c, 309, fig. 2), and Nijmegen-Hatert (Haalebos 1990). Examples of second and third centuries AD tumuli graves: Esch-Hoogkeiteren (Van den Hurk 1980, fig. 11), Hoogeloon (Slofstra 1991b, 151, fig. 13, fig. 23).

[145] For example Weert-Molenakkerdreef (Hiddink 1996).

In this discussion the changing relationships between the dead and the living have been investigated through a limited number of aspects. Other potentially relevant sources of information, such as the internal organisation of cemeteries, or the uses of artefact assemblages in the settlements and the cemeteries have not been considered.[146] What I hope to have demonstrated is that ancestors were not a stable category in the socio-cosmic order of the local communities of the MDS region, but that their significance was transformed more than once during the period from the Middle Bronze Age to the Early Roman period. While they probably had an important function in the self-definition of local communities in the Urnfield period, and probably in another way in the preceding period, this function is not so clear in the Middle and Late Iron Age from the mortuary evidence. In the Roman period the picture appears to have been more differentiated. As mentioned above, for all periods it is necessary to consider the mortuary evidence together with that from settlements, cult places and field systems. In that way it is possible to assess more thoroughly what the place of ancestors was in the social ordering of local communities and their settlement territories. A further discussion will therefore be postponed until the last section of this chapter.

4.3 ENCLOSED AND OPEN CULT PLACES AND OTHER ENCLOSURES

This section discusses a differentiated group of archaeological phenomena at whose core is a number of rectangular enclosures which are interpreted as open-air sanctuaries or cult places. Related to this group and included here are, on the one hand, locations which lack evidence of physical, man-made demarcations but which can be interpreted as cult places because of indications of recurrent ritual activities and the presence of a ritual focus, and on the other hand a group of enclosed spaces which differ in character and context from the enclosed cult places, but which, alongside other functions, may nevertheless have had ritual connotations. Their chronological developments are discussed, and some interpretative suggestions made by their excavators and others are commented upon. In the discussion the phenomena are looked at from the perspective of the symbolic construction of communities. Enclosures around settlements will be discussed in section 4.5.

4.3.1 RECTANGULAR ENCLOSURES WITH FUNERARY CONNOTATIONS

In a 1987 article Slofstra and Van der Sanden identified six rectangular enclosures from sites in the MDS region and argued for their interpretation as rural sanctuaries dating to the Roman period. They based this on the presence of shared features and on a comparison with different types of enclosures in Germany, northern France and southern England. Features shared by most or all MDS examples are a square or rectangular enclosure (ranging in size from 11.5 x 13 m and 45 x 45 m), a post alignment in the interior, the presence of large or numerous pits in the interior, and the occurrence of finds that can be associated with rituals and votive offerings.[147] In at least five cases a construction date in the first half of the 1st century AD is probable. In three, probably four, instances the enclosure was found within a set-

[146] Parker Pearson 1993, 206-207; cf. Roymans 1999 for an analysis of the internal organisation and use of grave goods in the Beegden urnfield (fig. 4.1).

[147] Slofstra/Van der Sanden 1987, 127-148.

Fig. 4.13 Oss. Middle Iron Age enclosure R26 with annex R26a and post arrangement R25, and cremation burials (stars). After Schinkel 1998, map 1 (sheet 15), and Van der Sanden 1998c, fig. 14.

tlement context, and there are indications that settlement and enclosure were founded at the same time. While Slofstra and Van der Sanden noted resemblances with enclosures in other regions, especially with the *enclos cultuels* of the "Belgian type" in northern France, they suggested that the native-Roman sanctuaries in the MDS region evolved out of local traditions associated with funerary practices.[148] During the excavations at Oss-Ussen, a composite monument consisting in an earlier phase of a palisade enclosure and in a later phase of a ditch and palisade enclosure dating to the end of the Middle Iron Age had been excavated (fig. 4.13, table 4.8 for details and references on the sites mentioned here). This monument includes a quadrangular annex on the western side, which appears to have been a funerary monument and is located within a dispersed group of cremation graves. Close to the centre of the annex a disturbed cremation grave was found, possibly with the remains of a four-post mortuary structure. Based on morphological similarities and the presence of over 3500 potsherds plus other artefacts in the ditches of the monument, Slofstra and Van der Sanden came to the conclusion that the monument was an open-air sanctuary associated with a funerary cult, and a forerunner to the Roman-period examples.

[148] Slofstra/Van der Sanden 1987, 155-156.

site	description	date	references
Nijmegen-Kops Plateau	enclosure with sides of cobble pavement, U-shaped or rectangular (24 x > 15m); palisade in interior (not in east?); northeast corner connected to 42m long cobble-paved allée, leading to MBA stone platform (funerary monument); bronze axe (late LBA/poss. EIA) among cobbles at meeting point enclosure and allée; 3 large pits in interior (EIA)	LBA/EIA	Fontijn/Cuijpers 1999; Fontijn 2002a
Oss-Ussen R25/26/26A	composite monument with ditched and palisaded enclosures; R25: palisade enclosure (25 x 25/26m), prob. oldest element, no associated finds; R26: square enclosure with ditch (32,5 x 33,5m) surrounded by palisade, entrance in east side; R26A: later annex of ditch (16 x 16,5m) surrounded palisade, entrance in east side; cremation grave with remains of poss. mortuary structure; 2 pits cut in ditch of R26 contemporary with use phase of monument; 3350 sherds in ditches/pits, some burnt animal bone (bovine, small animal); 3 cremation flat graves 10m to north (MIA)	MIA (Oss H: 300-250 BC)	Van der Sanden 1998c
Oss-Ussen R2	ditched enclosure, trapezoidal (20,8 x 15,5/10,2m); centre disturbed; 68 sherds in ditch, animal bone; ditch cut by pit with complete pot placed upside down (LIA: Oss K)	MIA (Oss H: 300-250 BC), used into LIA	Van der Sanden 1998c
Sittard-Hoogveld	ditched enclosure, square (ca. 35 x 35m); near circular ditches (MBA? Urnfield period?)	MIA/LIA?	Tol in prep.
Oss-Ussen R8	ditched enclosure, square (15 x 14,2/12,6m); square post setting in interior; entrance in east side; 127 sherds in ditch, matching sherds in different sides, unburned animal bone (bovine), cremation remains in northern ditch	LIA (Oss K-L: 100-0 BC)	Van der Sanden 1998c
Mierlo-Hout	ditched enclosure, rectangular (85 x 21m), interior bank supposed; 2 cremation graves in ditch fill; adjacent to LIA/ERP cemetery with square grave structures	1st c. BC, used into 1st c. AD	Roymans/Tol 1993
Wijshagen-Plokrooi	ditched enclosure, rectangular (34/36,5 x 20m); 2 cremation graves in interior (1 with animal bone, 1 with bowl and 2 iron brooches); adjacent to small group of square burial monuments (1st c. BC/1st c. AD)	1st c. BC, used into 1st c. AD	Creemers/Van Impe 1992
Destelbergen	group of 6 ditched enclosures (8 x 8 to 19 x 19?m), with central cremation burials, other burials around monuments and in ditches	EIA (HaC, used into Ha D)	De Laet 1966; De Laet et al. 1986
Aalter	ditched enclosure, rectangular (25 x 45,5m); cluster of postholes along inside eastern ditch, here deposition of 6 complete vessels; 5 cremation graves in interior	LIA	Bourgeois/Semey 1991
Ursel-Rozestraat	a) ditched enclosure, square (16,5/17,5 x 17,5/18m); ditches cut through foot of Bronze Age burial mound with double ring ditch; ca. 20 sherds in ditch; 2 cremation graves cut into ditch, 6 cremation graves directly to east and southeast of enclosure (LIA/ERP); b) to north of a), ditched enclosure, rectangular (49 x 16m); overlies 2 smaller quadrangular ditched enclosures; 68 cremation graves in interior and cut into ditch fill (LIA/ERP)	1st c. BC/ 1st c. AD	Bourgeois et al. 1989; Bourgeois/ Semey 1991
Knesselaere	ditched enclosure, square (15,6 x 14,8m); 4 corners marked by post on outside, nearby posthole (of 'entrance passage') with pot placed upside down in hole; 60 sherds in ditch; 4 cremation graves in interior enclosure, 2 cremation graves dug into partly infilled ditch; large pit (3,5 x 3 m, 1,2 m deep) directly to east of enclosure, with ca. 300 sherds of > 23 small vessels and beakers (1st c. AD)	LIA, used into 1st c. AD	Vermeulen/ Hageman 1997

Table 4.8 Enclosed cult places and possible cult places associated with funerary contexts. Lower part lists examples from outside the MDS region.

Excavations that have taken place since the 1987 article appeared, in the MDS region but also in East Flanders, have brought to light a small number of additional examples of prehistoric rectangular enclosures. This group is not uniform, but it does appear to confirm Slofstra and Van der Sanden's hypotheses concerning the local roots of the Roman-period sanctuaries and the funerary context of many prehistoric enclosures. The oldest rectangular enclosure known at present was found at the Kops Plateau in Nijmegen (fig. 4.14). It measures 24 by at least 15 metres, and is surrounded by 1.5 to 2 metre wide pave-

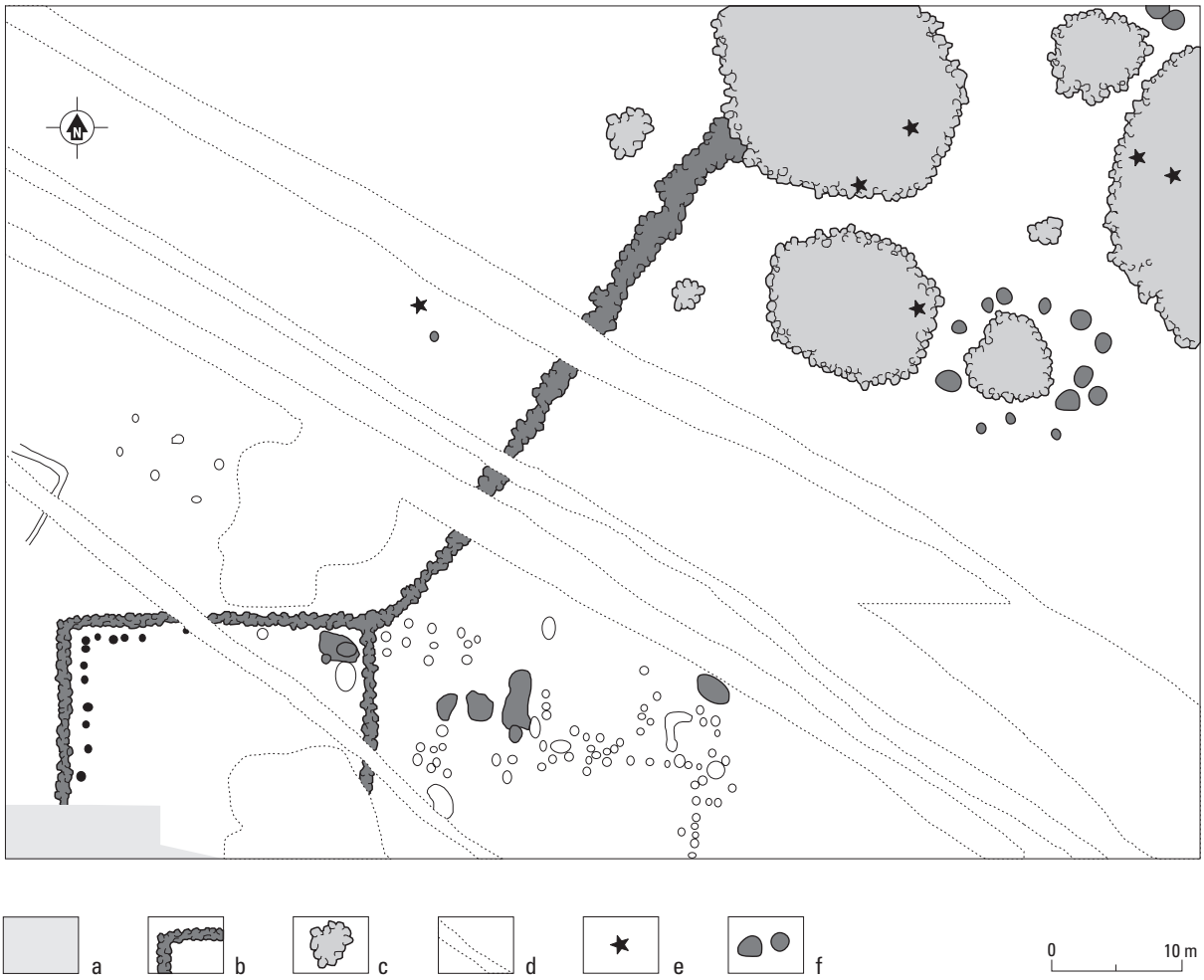

Fig. 4.14 Nijmegen-Kops Plateau. Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age enclosure with *allée* leading to cluster of Middle Bronze Age burial monuments, and Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cremation graves. After Fontijn/Cuijpers 1999, fig. 3. a) not excavated; b) Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age cobble pavement of enclosure and *allée*; c) Middle Bronze Age stone platform (grave monument); d) recent disturbance; e) Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age cremation burial; f) Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pits.

ments of cobbles and pebbles. Several pits in the interior, filled with pottery, stones exposed to fire, and an iron knife, date to the Early Iron Age and are probably related to the monument. A bronze axe provides additional evidence to date the monument. It had been placed among or under the cobbles in the northeastern corner of the enclosure and can be dated to the second half of the Late Bronze Age or possibly the beginning of the Early Iron Age. From this corner a 42 metre long *allée*, made of a similar cobble pavement as that surrounding the enclosure, led to a circular cobble platform which has been interpreted as the base of a Middle Bronze Age barrow. During the time of the use of the enclosure several urn graves were buried in the earlier barrow and its surroundings.

Other examples of enclosures with funerary associations mostly date to the later part of the Middle Iron Age and the Late Iron Age. Several, including the one mentioned above, come from Oss. The distinction between funerary monuments and cult enclosures cannot always be made. In at least two cases (Oss R2 and R8) a primary function as a funerary monument cannot be excluded. There are two noteworthy examples of rectangular enclosures dating to the end of the Late Iron Age or the beginning of the Roman period, from Mierlo-Hout and Wijshagen-Plokrooi (fig. 4.10). These measure 85 by 21 and 36.5 by 20 metres respectively. In the Wijshagen case the ditch may have enclosed a primary – but eccentric –

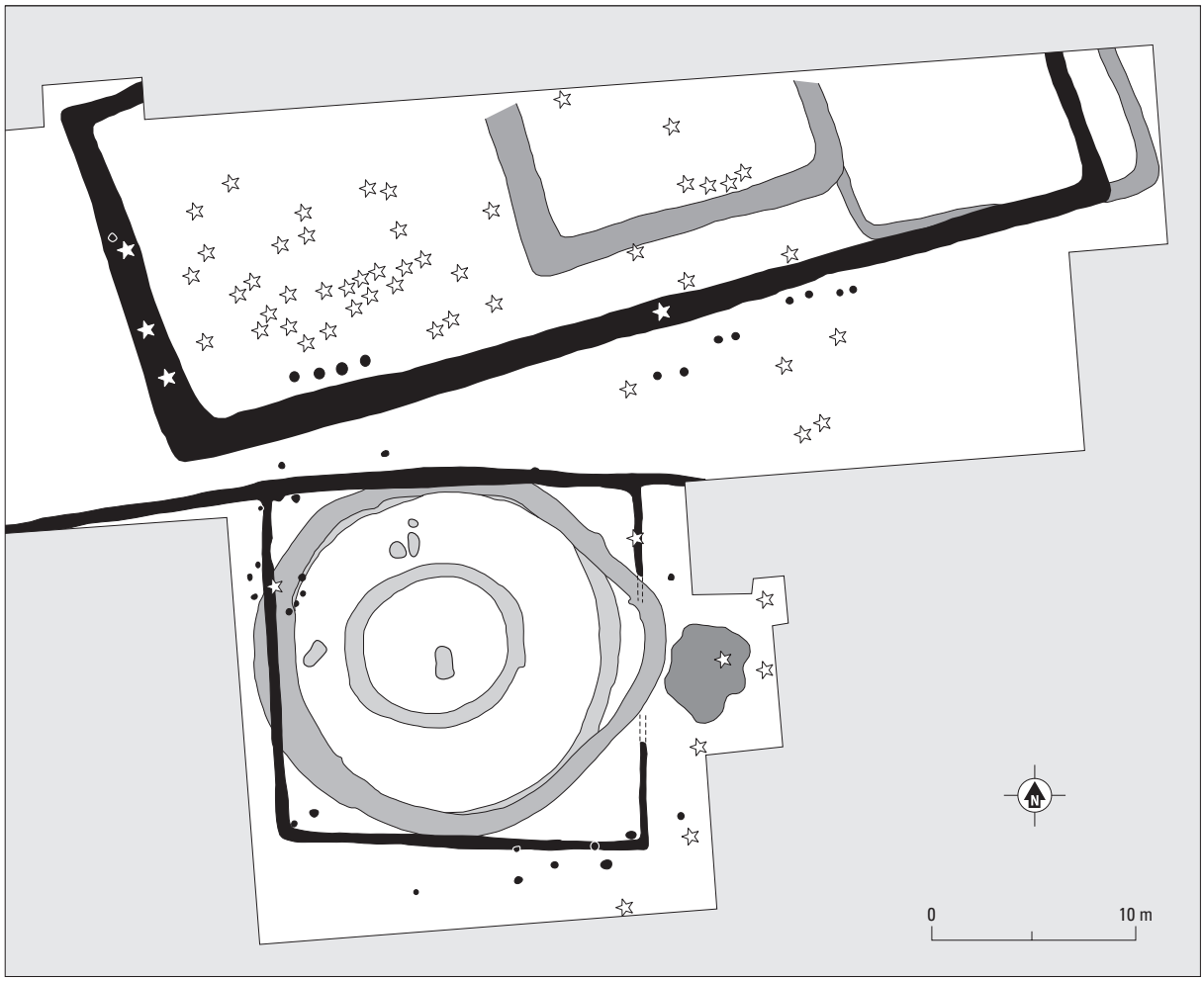

Fig. 4.15 Ursel-Rozestraat. Late Iron Age/Early Roman period enclosures, incorporating a Bronze Age barrow, with Late Iron Age and Early Roman period cremation graves. After Bourgeois/Semey 1991, fig. 7.

grave, but there were no indications that the primary function of the Mierlo-Hout enclosure was that of a funerary monument. An association with funerary contexts is, however, strongly suggested by the position of the enclosures adjacent to a Late Iron Age and Early Roman Period communal cemetery. The excavators at both sites assume that the enclosures constitute the earliest element of the cemetery.[149]

The close association of quadrangular enclosures and funerary activities form an equally marked and recognisable pattern in Flanders to the west of the Scheldt river. There, square and rectangular ditched enclosures associated with burials were found at several sites.[150] At Destelbergen, square enclosures occur as grave monuments dating to the Early Iron Age and predate by several centuries the first appearance of Middle Iron Age square monuments in the MDS region. This site was singled out by De Laet to support his theory about the prehistoric and funerary origins of Gallo-Roman sanctuaries,[151] but there is in fact

[149] Roymans/Tol 1993, 50; Creemers/Van Impe 1992 respectively.

[150] See the lower part of table 4.8 for a list (incomplete) with references. In this part of Belgium, hundreds of prehistoric features, mainly circular barrow remains but also rectangular and square ditched features, have been detected through a long-term aerial photography project (Ampe et al. 1995; Bourgeois et al. 1998; Bourgeois et al. 1999).

[151] De Laet 1966.

little evidence to suggest that these monuments differed from regular grave markers. More interesting in this respect are the enclosures at Ursel (fig. 4.15). There, the site of a multi-period Bronze Age barrow was selected in the Late Iron Age for the construction of a square ditched enclosure, with the ditch cutting through the back-filled ditch of the earlier mound. It is likely that the mound had not been levelled and it may still have been recognised as a burial monument (see 4.2.4). Directly north of the enclosure another rectangular ditched enclosure came to light, measuring 49 by 20 metres and also dating to the Late Iron Age.[152] The ditch of this monument had filled, or been filled, in again quite rapidly after it was dug, but the site remained a focus for burial activities into the Early Roman period.

It appears from this description that, even though the number of cult places in the MDS region and Flanders is still small, Slofstra and Van der Sanden and before them De Laet were right in proposing a genetic relationship between a category of cult places and funerary monuments.[153] There are morphological similarities between Middle and Late Iron Age enclosed cult places and square or rectangular grave monuments of the last phase of the Urnfield period. The spatial associations of many cult places and graves point equally in the direction of a genetic relationship. This association takes several forms: 1) enclosures near or on top of older burial monuments, as at Nijmegen-Kops Plateau and Ursel, 2) enclosures which became a focus for later interments, sometimes placed within the partly back-filled ditch (Oss R8, Mierlo-Hout, Ursel, Knesselaere), sometimes outside it (Oss R26, Destelbergen), and 3) enclosures which became the focus of a new communal cemetery (Mierlo-Hout, Wijshagen, Ursel). The distinction between funerary monuments and cult places is not in fact always clear from the archaeological evidence, and while this presents problems of identification, it supports Slofstra and Van der Sanden's idea that the cult practices associated with the enclosed cult places of the MDS region focused on ancestors.[154] I will suggest below, however, that not all enclosed cult places in the later part of the Iron Age as well as in the Roman period have a relationship with burial rituals and ancestors. It is first necessary to consider the nature of the cult at the cult places discussed so far.

In several regions in Northwestern Europe the activities carried out at enclosed cult places have been interpreted as ancestor cults. In southern Germany, the cult at the *Viereckschanzen* has been interpreted as an ancestor cult on the basis of the frequent proximity of funerary monuments, usually much older barrow groups, and on indications that anthropomorphic steles representing the dead sometimes stood on top of such barrows.[155] Slofstra and Van der Sanden suggest that the open-air sanctuaries of the Roman period were also places for a cult focused on ancestors, even though by that time they had lost the spatial association with graves and cemeteries.[156] Cult practices involved votive offerings, in particular the breakage and deposition of objects in pits and the enclosing ditches.

David Fontijn has recently advanced an additional hypothesis.[157] He proposes that the enclosed cult places were not just for the *worship* of ancestors, but also for the *creation* of ancestors in the course of the burial rituals. He argues on the basis of the finds at Nijmegen-Kops Plateau that the enclosure was the location of a stage in the burial rituals. Its location just below the top of a plateau on which funerary monuments had been constructed from the Late Neolithic onwards, in a transitional position between the cemetery and settlement remains, suggests that the enclosure may have been perceived as a liminal place. Perhaps a dead person was placed inside the enclosure during the liminal stages of the burial rit-

[152] The ditch cuts through two earlier square or rectangular enclosures.

[153] It may be, however, as Fontijn has suggested, that the origin of rectangular enclosures lay not with funerary monuments, but conversely, that rectangular funerary monuments grew out of a tradition of using rectangular cult places (Fontijn 2002a).

[154] Slofstra/Van der Sanden 1987, 157-159.

[155] Bittel 1978; Wieland 1999.

[156] Slofstra/Van der Sanden 1987, 159.

[157] Fontijn 2002a.

uals, in between the stage of being alive and being no more than a spiritless corpse. Afterwards, the bodily remains were taken along the cobbled *allée* to its final resting place within the urnfield. If Fontijn's hypothesis is correct, this means that cult places should be viewed slightly differently. They are not only to be regarded as ancestral monuments, but also as places for the creation of ancestors. What makes the hypothesis difficult to substantiate for the Urnfield period in general is the fact that the enclosure at Nijmegen has at present no parallels.

As with the Nijmegen example, two enclosures - the Late Iron Age enclosures of Wijshagen-Plokrooi and Mierlo-Hout - are located adjacent to a cemetery. They are much later in date, however, and this makes any comparison tenuous, but a similar function for a specific stage in the burial rituals should not be ruled out. However, for most other examples, such a relationship and liminal position of the enclosure is much less evident. In those cases where graves are dug within the bounds of the enclosure it may be more likely that the cult place was associated with a general ancestor cult, rather than with a specific stage in the burial rituals.

Numerous questions remain of course with regard to the nature of the activities that took place within the enclosures. It remains a matter of speculation whether rituals, ceremonies or feasts were carried out in the course of a yearly liturgical cycle, to ask for blessing and support to overcome a particular hardship, or as a way of giving thanks for successful support for a hardship that was overcome. Equally, it is unknown whether ancestor cults were directed at particular, named ancestors, or to a more general category of community ancestors. The fact that enclosures were constructed which in size far surpassed that of individual funerary monuments suggests that a sizeable group of people rather than individuals engaged in cultic activities. This could in turn be taken as an indication that the cult addressed a more generalised group of ancestors, but at present this problem remains unsolved. Another question worth raising is why ancestral cults at some point, at the beginning or during the course of the Iron Age, required the construction of specialised, permanent places which were not the funerary monuments themselves. As was shown in section 4.2, the importance of ancestors in the lives of the prehistoric inhabitants of the MDS region considerably predates the construction of the first enclosed cult places, and from the Late Neolithic to at least the end of the Urnfield period the barrows and cemeteries in which the ancestors were buried were presumably the appropriate places for interaction with them. Why then, at a particular historical moment was there a need to differentiate between burial grounds and cult places? I will return to this question in section 4.3.4.

4.3.2 ENCLOSURES WITHOUT APPARENT FUNERARY CONNOTATIONS

Slofstra and Van der Sanden observed that the Middle Iron Age cult place at Oss (R26) was located in a different setting than the examples from the Roman period. Whereas the latter were largely associated with settlements, the former was part of a diffuse cemetery and did not stand in the vicinity of any farmsteads. They took this to represent a development of an ancestor cult that focused on a particular type of ancestor, settlement founders.[158] They argued, moreover, that this change needs to be understood within a process of differentiation and hierarchisation of the socio-political as well as the religious order, a process which they place in the last century BC and the 1st century AD. I will return to their argument below, but will first discuss several enclosures of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age which are associated with settlement features rather than cemeteries, and for which an interpretation as a cult place needs to be considered (tables 4.9, 4.10).

[158] Slofstra/Van der Sanden 1987, 161.

site	description	date	references
Oss-Ussen R49	ditched enclosure, rectangular (18,5 x 19m) with palisade on 3 or 4 sides inside enclosure; opening in eastern side; in interior indications for fires: discolored sand, 2 postholes with numerous secondarily burnt sherds and possible clay hearth fragments; over 1100 sherds in ditch, matching sherds in different sides, some burnt animal bone (bovine, bird, pig); contemporaneous farmsteads directly to east (MIA Oss G-H)	MIA (Oss H: 300-250 BC)	Van der Sanden 1998c
Kontich-Alfsberg	phase a): ditched enclosure with two adjacent enclosed spaces (west: 27,8 x > 36,2m; east: > 35 x > 22,8m); entrances in both southern sides; palisade in western enclosure, possibly removed from eastern; in interior western enclosure incompletely excavated timber-built structure (13,6 x > 9,5m), and linear row of 4 posts; phase b): ditched enclosure around western phase a) enclosure, (55 x 65m, ditch approx. 8 m wide en 4 m deep, flat base); 2m high bank between ditch and older palisade; possibly a bridge opposite entrance phase a); filling of lower part of ditch; pits in centre interior area; phase c): upper parts of ditch filled in two stages (1st c. BC/1st c. AD), containing high numbers of sherds and other artefacts; row of pits lining exterior of ditch withsame fill as upper layers of ditch; second, partially excavated enclosure to east	phase a): LIA phase b) and c): dug LIA (1st c. BC), used into 1st c. AD	Annaert 1993; idem 1995/1996; idem 1996b
Oss-Ussen R57	ditched enclosure, quadrangular (45 x >40m); incompletely excavated; 11m long row of 5 posts in interior, 347 sherds in ditch, 1 whole vessel, unburned animal bone (bovine, sheep/goat, pig, dog); monument built over by 3 native Roman farmhouses (1st c. AD)	1st c. AD (poss. 1st c. BC)	Slofstra/Van der Sanden 1987; Van der Sanden 1998c; Wesselingh 2000

Table 4.9 Enclosed cult places and possible cult places, without apparent funerary connotations.

site	description	date	references
Loon op Zand	double ditched enclosure, rounded rectangular; inner enclosure 19 x > 8m, outer enclosure 29,5 x > 30m; possibly palisade in ditch; openings in southern sides of both ditches; 50 sherds in ditches; contemporaneous settlement traces directly to south	LBA/EIA	Roymans/Hiddink 1991a
Bladel-Kriekeschoor	double ditch system with entrance, closing off triangular area between confluence of two streams; several whole pots, complete grinding stone and cattle horns in upper fill; the enclosed area covers over 5 ha	MIA/LIA	Roymans 1982
Weert-Laarderweg	double ditched enclosure; inner oval (ca. 160 x 110m, ditches ca. 4m wide, 2m deep), probably interior bank; in interior enclosure four-post structures; outer enclosure very incompletely investigated, rounded rectangular (est. 260 x 300m, ditches ca. 1,5m deep); interior bank; LIA/ERP nucleated settlement between inner and outer enclosure, possibly founded with construction enclosures but inhabited after ditches had been backfilled	LIA (2nd/1st c. BC)	Tol 1995; idem 1996a; idem 1998a
Voerendaal	ditched enclosure (90 x >74m); ditch originally 3,5m wide, 2,5m deep, V-shaped profile, no indications for bank; in interior remains of post-built buildings; site of later villa; a ditch enclosing an area of 264 x >172m, dated to 50BC-50AD, also predates the villa	late LIA	Willems/Kooistra 1988

Table 4.10 Other enclosures. Lower part lists example from outside the MDS region.

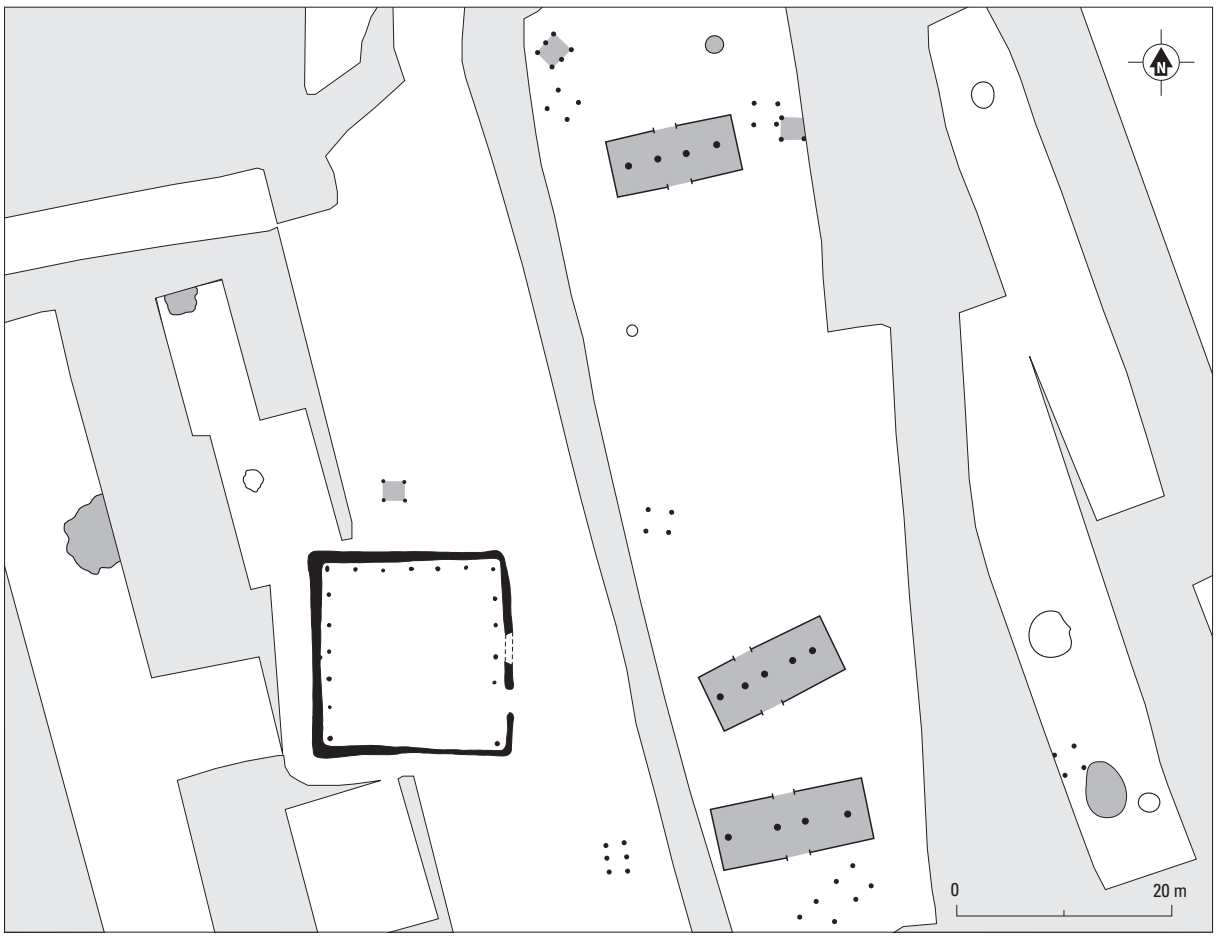

Fig. 4.16 Oss. Middle Iron Age enclosure R49, and settlement remains dating to the same period (grey). After Schinkel 1998, map 1 (sheet 15 and 16), and Van der Sanden 1998c, fig. 20.

The clearest example of a cult place associated with settlement remains was found at Oss (R49, fig. 4.16). It dates to the end of the Middle Iron Age, and with regard to form and size it conforms to the enclosures associated with funerary contexts discussed above. Activities that had taken place in the interior included the use of fire, resulting in several concentrations of secondarily burnt potsherds and a patch of discoloured sand. As was the case with the contemporaneous cult place with grave R26, the fill of the ditch contained considerable quantities of potsherds and other finds, and this suggested to the excavators that this enclosure too was probably a cult place.[159] Any indications for graves in the interior or in the vicinity are absent, and while this may have been the result of post-depositional processes, it is remarkable that this cult place, in contrast to similar examples, must have been located quite close to one or more contemporary farmsteads. Three houses, as well as a number of granaries and pits, were found in the near vicinity.

Of a different nature is the complex of enclosures at Kontich (fig. 4.17). Between the Late Iron Age and the beginning of the Roman period, an enclosure which the excavator interpreted as a *Viereckschanze* was constructed, seriously altered at least once and fairly rapidly abandoned again. In a first phase (following a Middle Iron Age domestic use of the site) a rectangular enclosure was surrounded and divided

[159] Van der Sanden 1998c, 315-316.

Fig. 4.17 Kontich-Alfsberg. Late Iron Age enclosures. After Annaert 1995/1996, plate 1. a) not excavated; b) recent disturbance; c) ditch of earlier enclosure; d) ditch of later enclosure; e) building; f) pits.

in two by ditches with palisades set in them. In the interior of the western half stood a rectangular building and two perpendicular rows of posts which are reminiscent of the post alignments within the enclosure at Gournay in northern France and those in later examples from the MDS region. In a second phase of use, a ditch and bank of impressive dimensions surrounded this half, with a ditch of about eight metres wide and four metres deep. This ditch was back-filled within a fairly short time span and included, especially in its upper layers, large amounts of pottery dating to the transition to the Roman era or the 1st century AD. A row of large pits surrounding this ditch contained finds of the same period. Rica Annaert, the excavator of this complex, has suggested that the complex was associated with the residence of an elite group, and that within the enclosure a combination of religious, political and social manifestations may have been held.[160] She regards the linear post constellations in the interior and the cluster of pits in the centre as the main indications for the cultic aspects of the use of the enclosure.[161]

[160] Annaert 1993, 114-115.

[161] Annaert 1993, 97-106.

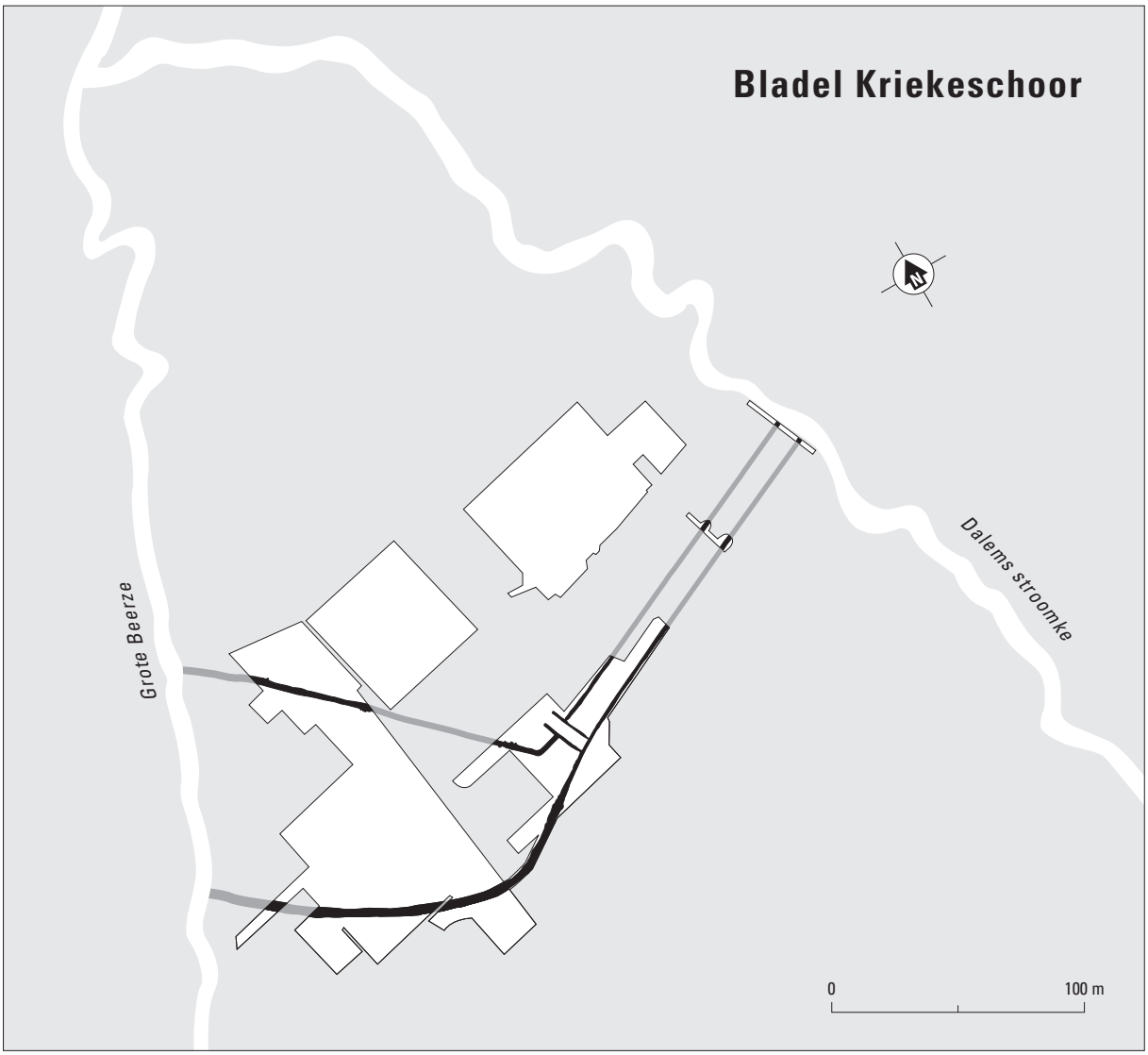

Fig. 4.18 Bladel-Kriekeschoor. Middle or Late Iron Age enclosure with (closed-off) entrance, at the confluence of two streams. In the interior of the enclosure a gold Celtic coin was found. After Roymans 1982, fig. 17.

Dating to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age is an enclosure at Loon op Zand. This partially excavated complex consists of an inner (oval?) and outer (rounded rectangular?) space enclosed by ditches. Entrances lead into both sections from the south. Settlement traces of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age were found directly to the south of the enclosure. An interpretation as a cult place is suggested only by its very general formal similarities with other cult places, but as there are no indications for other functions either, this possibility should be taken into account.

Similarly, one can speculate about the cultic functions of a ditch system bounding off the tip of land above the confluence of two small streams near Bladel, the Aa and the Dalems Stroompje (fig. 4.18). Confluences are well-known locations of cult places,[162] but this is of course no conclusive indication for the function of the Bladel ditch system. It has been interpreted tentatively as a cattle corral with droveway.[163] The fill of the ditches, however, included several items that were reminiscent of the deposits that

[162] Derks 1998, 139.

[163] Only a preliminary report has appeared on this enclosure (Roymans 1982).

were found in the ditches of cult places at other sites: a small ceramic vessel placed inside a large pot, located at the (closed-off?) entrance, a complete tephrite grinding stone and one or more cattle horns. A Celtic gold coin appeared as an isolated find from the interior of the enclosed area. A striking difference from the enclosures discussed above is the size of the area bounded off. In Bladel this measures over 4 hectares, many times larger than Oss R49 or Kontich. In that respect it is comparable to large-scale enclosures that have been found at Weert and Voerendaal in Dutch Limburg, both dating to the Late Iron Age.

4.3.3 OTHER TYPES OF CULT PLACES

Contrary to what the discussion up to now may suggest, open-air sanctuaries or cult places are not always defined by the presence of a physical, man-made demarcation such as a palisade or ditch.[164] Even if there was a difference in sacrality between the cult place and its surroundings, this need not have been represented by a physical boundary. Consider, for example, the phenomenon well-known throughout north-western and central Europe of ritual depositions in moors, rivers and sources.[165] The finds indicate that those locations, or at least those at which depositions are a recurring feature, were also considered to have a sacred character. I do not want to argue that each location that at a particular moment had been the focus of ritualised activities or had acquired a certain degree of sacredness should be regarded as a cult place. Evidently, a foundation deposit in a house does not turn that house into a cult place. But I would stress that cult places in a narrow sense of the word cannot be understood when viewed separately from a wider landscape with a mythical geography in which a whole range of cosmological elements are recognised.[166] Derks has recently used the notion of a ritual focus as a defining characteristic of cult places.[167] These foci can be natural phenomena or man-made creations such as pits, hearths, posts, altars or cult images. In this section I will briefly review some of the evidence for cult places (according to Derks' definition) without man-made boundary demarcations, with the primary objective of giving an idea of some of the relevant contexts for studying late prehistoric mythical geographies.[168]

The best-known possible cult places of this kind can be grouped together under the heading 'wet contexts': rivers and streams, moors and lakes. The main rivers of the Lower Rhine region as well as the Scheldt have produced numerous prehistoric artefacts through dredging activities for sand and gravel extraction. Common artefact groups include weaponry (axes, dirks, swords, spears), coins, brooches, bronze vessels, agricultural tools, pottery and animal and human remains. Analysis has focused primarily on the metal finds. In the Meuse there are clear concentrations of finds near the mouth of the Roer river at Roermond and near Kessel at a place where the Meuse and the Waal joined in prehistory and the Roman period.[169] Another concentration occurs in the Waal at Nijmegen.[170] These concentrations can-

[164] Derks 1998, 132-134.

[165] E.g., Torbrügge 1970-1971; Bradley 1990; Roymans 1990, 84-90; idem 1991; Fontijn 2002b.

[166] Tilley 1994; Roymans 1995a; Derks 1997; idem 1998.

[167] Derks 1998, 133.

[168] This section does not claim to do justice to the importance of the topic for understanding the ideological dimensions of the prehistoric landscape, in particular for understanding the construction and meaning of boundary zones away from the settlement areas. Its brevity is due to a scarcity of evidence between the end of the Late Bronze Age and the Late La Tène period, and the fact that this topic is being studied at present by others: Fontijn 2002b, Roymans 1990, 84-90; idem 1991, 20-49, 1996b, 13-41. For the notion of mythical geography: Kommers 1994.

[169] In addition to weaponry from these locations (Verwers/Ypey 1975; Roymans 1990; idem 1991; idem 1996b, 13-41; Verhart/Roymans 1998), the human skeletal remains from Kessel have been studied recently (Ter Schegget 1999).

[170] Fontijn/Cuijpers 1999.

not be solely attributed to differential dredging intensities. The assemblages of weapons and human bones show marked chronological patterns. While metal finds from many periods ranging from the Middle Bronze Age to the Middle Ages are present, there are distinct peaks in the Middle and Late Bronze Age as well as at the end of the Late Iron Age.[171] Some of the dated human skeletal remains from Kessel date to the Middle Iron Age, but there is a clear increase in the Late Iron Age and the Roman period.[172] The Early and Middle Iron Age periods are strikingly absent in the river depositions.[173]

Other wet contexts, peat-bogs, stream valleys, lakes, and springs, are well-known places of ritual depositions in the late prehistoric world of north-western Europe.[174] But even though the landscape of the MDS region would have provided many such contexts, the archaeological record is rather poor. This may be partly due to post-medieval practices of peat extraction from small peat bogs and larger moors without the existence of institutions such as regional museums or antiquarian societies that raised awareness and documented finds in the period of pre-scientific archaeology.[175] Undoubtedly, large amounts of early finds have been lost in this manner. A category of finds that forms an exception to this scarcity are bronze axes.[176] Hoards of axes or axes together with other metal objects are known, but are not common.[177] They appear to be associated with dry-land contexts rather than streams or marshes. Much more common are isolated bronze axes dating to the Bronze Age and the earliest part of the Early Iron Age. Provenance information consistently points to small streams and peat bogs. Fontijn has recently argued that many of the axe finds represent single ritual depositions made by households or local groups, perhaps associated with domestic and agrarian cycles.[178] Since there do not appear to have been fixed locations for these kinds of deposits, they do not comprise formal cult places according to the definition used here.

This does not preclude the possibility, however, that peat bogs and moors were also the site of more formal cult places. Van der Sanden has demonstrated for Drenthe that peat bogs and moors were locations for ritual depositions throughout prehistory and up to the Middle Ages.[179] A wide range of artefact types was appropriate for deposition: flint, stone and metal weapons and tools, jewellery, wheels, agricultural implements, pottery, animals, humans, wool, cloth, hair etc. Moreover, there is evidence that man-made structures sometimes served as a focus for depositions within a peat bog or moor.[180] The most spectacular of these are no doubt the Middle Bronze Age timber-built sanctuary of Bargeroosterveld and the wooden roads sometimes leading several kilometres into peat moors and associated with concentrations of ritual depositions. Less conspicuous are structures such as cobble pavements, stone piles, post alignments, hearths and pits. If we can compare the situation in Drenthe in any way with that of the MDS region, which is a reasonable supposition, then there is reason to assume that there too particular peat bogs and moors were features in the landscape that were singled out for recurring ritual depositions.

One cult place in the MDS region associated with a forested river dune rather than with the actual wet parts of the landscape is the Gallo-Roman temple of Empel and its Late Iron Age predecessors.[181] The pre-Roman phases of this cult place are poorly represented by structural elements, but there are

171 Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age: Roymans 1991; Fontijn 2002b; Late La Tène and Early Roman period: Roymans 1990; idem 1996b, 13-41.

172 Ter Schegget 1999, 202-204, table 1, fig. 3.

173 For some rare examples, see Van den Broeke 2001.

174 Bradley 1990; Van der Sanden 1996.

175 In this respect the MDS region differs from Drenthe, for example, where the museum in Assen played a key role early on in the collection and documentation of ancient artefacts that came to light during peat-cutting activities (Van der Sanden 1990, 80-93). For finds from Drenthe: Van der Sanden 1990b; idem 1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1998a and 1998b.

176 Fontijn 2002b.

177 E.g., Heppeneert (Van Impe 1994); Lutlommel-Konijnepijp (Van Impe 1995/1996).

178 Fontijn 2002b.

179 Van der Sanden 1990; idem 1995, 1997a, 1998a, and 2001.

180 Van der Sanden 2001.

181 Roymans/Derks 1994; Derks 1998, 139, 146, fig. 4.6, 177.

indications for an enclosure surrounded by wicker-work fences and two post alignments of which one was surrounded by a number of shallow pits. Several types of votive offerings (coins, brooches, belt buckles) provide the most convincing evidence for a function of the site as a cult place from the 2nd century BC onwards. In the MDS region comparable pre-Roman cult places cannot be pointed out with certainty, but this is certainly not because of the uniqueness of the location where the temple was built. It is likely that more river dunes and other prominent locations in the landscape became a focus of ritual activities and depositions, but without the presence of a later formal cult place on the scale of Empel, chances of discovery are slim.

4.3.4 CULT PLACES AND CULT COMMUNITIES

It is clear that cult places, including sacred places with a ritual focus but without a demarcation of a sacred area, wered a feature of the landscape long before the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age. They belonged to a range of localities in the landscape which were considered special, ancestral or sacred, and which figured prominently in the mythical geography. New in the first millennium BC was the occurrence of rectangular enclosed cult places. The earliest example to date comes from the transition of the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age. A majority of the Iron Age enclosed cult places were associated with funerary contexts and probably connected to ancestor cults. There are indications, however, that at least as early as the end of the Middle Iron Age cult places existed that were associated spatially with farmsteads and settlements. The cult practices carried out there involved the breakage and deposition of pottery and other objects and possibly the consumption of food, leading to similar artefact assemblages as those associated with cult places in funerary settings. Given their settlement context, however, ritual practices may not have focused primarily on ancestors but on other cosmological phenomena.

I should stress that this is not to say that ancestor-focused rituals are necessarily spatially separated from farmsteads or settlements. In the previous chapter I have argued that from the Middle Iron Age onwards, some farmsteads may have had ancestral connotations. Moreover, with our poor understanding of the rituals that took place inside the enclosures, and with the poor preservation of an arguably key category of material – bone – it would be unwise to exclude any potential kind of cult. Nevertheless, it appears to me that in a situation where there are both funerary and other cult places – and especially when a process of spatial disassociation from funerary contexts takes place – this indicates a differentiation in the ritual practices.

This interpretation of the data differs in two respects from the one presented by Slofstra and Van der Sanden. Firstly, they assumed that rectangular enclosed cult places did not become disassociated from funerary contexts until the Roman period, whereas I would argue that this had already taken place in the later Iron Age. Secondly, they assume that the Roman period rural sanctuaries were associated primarily with cults for ancestors and the dead, even though they are located within or near nucleated settlements, while I have suggested that the differentiated settings of cult places correspond to differentiated ritual practices which not in all cases need have been directed towards ancestors.

Slofstra and Van der Sanden's interpretation of pre-Roman cult places is understandable given their anthropological perspective.[182] Their argument rests on the supposition that religion in pre-modern societies was intimately connected to the social and political dimensions of a society, and while I agree fully with them in that respect, their inference that the degree of differentiation of cosmological representa-

[182] Slofstra/Van der Sanden 1987, 159-162. Their source of inspiration is Wolf (1982), who makes a distinction between kin-ordered and tributary modes of production.

tions and religious expressions corresponds to the level of socio-political complexity in a society appears to me problematic. They argue that, if the Iron Age societies of the MDS region were not characterised by a high degree of socio-political complexity, we can expect the religious expressions and cultic practices in the MDS region to also have been relatively uniform.[183] Within such a perspective, there is little room for differentiated uses of cult places. This viewpoint can be criticised on two grounds. First, the empirical data do not support their conclusions and indicate that there were several kinds of cult places simultaneously in the Iron Age landscape. Second, ethnographic studies on the cosmological ordering of non-western societies have demonstrated that societies with a limited socio-political complexity can have immensely complex systems of cosmological representations and correspondingly complex religious expressions.[184]

With a more differentiated view of cult places and ritual practices in mind, it is interesting to raise some questions about the appearance and transformations of enclosed cult places. Why did enclosed cult places arise within funerary contexts, when at an earlier time the barrow or the communal cemetery would presumably have been an appropriate place for death rituals and ancestor worship? Why did enclosed cult places also appear later within the realm of farmsteads and settlements, and what is the nature of the cult at those sites? How should we envisage the cult communities that were associated with different kinds of cult places? In the remainder of this section I will focus primarily on the last question, and I will confinet myself moreover to enclosed cult places and enclosures with possible cultic aspects.

It is easy to imagine how the project of establishing a formal cult place in itself led to the symbolic construction of a community whose boundaries were marked by involvement in the project. Laying out the site, digging ditches and erecting a bank or palisade marking off the sacred space from the profane surroundings, erecting cult posts, followed by the inauguration of the cult place, all at a place that may already have been accorded a sacred nature, would have been perceived in terms of ritualised activities. This could also have given special value to the social relationships that were established or reinforced through the communal project. As well as being a place for cultic practices, therefore, an enclosed cult place could have been a powerful symbol of the community involved in its construction.

Ton Derks relates the appearance in northwestern Europe of supra-local cult places as separate and permanently used structures in the third century BC to processes of societal hierarchisation.[185] Cult places would have provided new rituals and symbols through which social relationships could be redefined and ultimately be institutionalised as relationships of inequality. After the Roman conquest local elite competition led to major construction projects of stone Gallo-Roman temple complexes in parts of northern Gaul. In the MDS region this trend toward monumentalisation in the Roman period was restricted to a few sanctuaries of regional significance, for example the temples of Empel and Elst, and did not take place at local cult places.[186] Even so, it can be imagined that in a more general sense the construction of an enclosed cult place in the Middle or Late Iron Age in the MDS region would have provided individuals with opportunities to gain prestige and power, for example by sponsoring feasts and sacrifices. It is highly unlikely, though, that at the local level at which these cult places functioned unequal relationships were institutionalised to such a degree that individuals or individual families could claim the full credit for a cult place and exclude others from the local cult community.

With regard to the socially integrative aspects of an enclosure and its construction, the differences between formal cult places and other kinds of enclosures become somewhat blurred and less meaningful. While the digging of an enclosure to mark off settlement space, to create a defensive barrier or even

[183] Slofstra/Van de Sanden 1987, 161.

[184] E.g., De Coppet/Iteanu 1995; Lewis 1995; Descola 1996 [1994].

[185] Derks 1998, 183.

[186] Derks 1998, 183-185.

a cattle corral would not have increased the sacrality of the interior space, the labour-intensive project would have the same potential in terms of creating and reinforcing social and political relationships.

The symbolic construction of a cult community did not take place only at the time the enclosed cult places were constructed, but undoubtedly also during the rituals that were carried out there. Unfortunately, very little is known about the nature of these rituals. The spatial organisation of cult places provides some clues, however.[187] Typically, there is an opening in the enclosing ditch that forms an entrance to the interior of the enclosure. The interior is an open space without post-built structures. Post alignments that occur in the Roman period appear to be absent in the Iron Age.[188] Pits are sometimes present in the interior or are dug into the partly in-filled ditches. Ritual activities would have taken place in the interior, and during the highpoint of the ritual activities access to the interior may have been restricted to a handful of ritual specialists.[189] But given the size of the enclosed spaces, I would envisage that there were also times when the whole cult community gathered within the enclosure.[190] These would have been times when, in the presence of the whole local cult community, ancestors or other cosmological phenomena were invoked and engaged in exchange relationships, when origin myths may have been told or re-enacted, and when central ideas and values of the society were made explicit. Especially during these moments, the boundary of the enclosure may have carried strong symbolic significance as the boundary of the cult community, physically distinguishing those within the enclosure from outsiders.

Although we can say something about the mechanisms through which membership of a cult community was created and symbolised, questions about the relationship between local communities, burial communities and cult communities are another matter. I posited in section 2.4.5 that burial communities and local communities largely overlapped in the Urnfield period, but that this relationship was much less clear in the post-Urnfield period. Is it significant that, with some exceptions, cult places become a feature of the landscape in the period after the communal cemeteries of the Urnfield period had been abandoned? It is tempting to speculate that from the end of the Middle Iron Age onwards, local communities were defined in terms of cult communities instead of as burial communities. While it is probable that the enclosed cult places functioned at a local level, it is still unclear whether they were a feature of each Middle and Late Iron Age settlement territory. The landscape at Oss apparently included several contemporaneous enclosed cult places, at least one of which was associated with burials and one with a dispersed group of farmsteads. But in Someren or Haps enclosed cult places have not been encountered during large-scale excavation projects with extensive remains of the Middle and Late Iron Age. The Late Iron Age double enclosure at Weert, on the other hand, can be envisaged as the central element of a settlement territory and the defining focus of a local community, but its size (the outer ditch systems encloses at least seven hectares) indicates that it may also have functioned at a modest supra-local level (fig. 4.19).

A final issue for discussion is the existence of cult places that were significant for much larger social groups than the local communities. The numbers of deposited artefacts and the richness of the assemblages at seveal stretches of river (for example at Roermond and Nijmegen) suggest that they had a supralocal significance during the Middle and Late Bronze Age, and again from the Late La Tène period onwards (Kessel). At least as early as the 1st century AD there were also sanctuaries on land which clearly had a

[187] Only enclosures which can be confidently interpreted as cult places are included here, both from the MDS region (Nijmegen, Oss R25/26, Oss R 49, Mierlo-Hout, Wijshagen-Plokrooi) and from Flanders (Aalter, Ursel, Knesselaere). These show the closest correspondence to the rural sanctuaries of the Roman period described by Slofstra and Van der Sanden (1987).

[188] An exception of an Iron Age post alignment was found at Kontich-Alfsberg, but an interpretation of this enclosure solely as a cult place is problematic.

[189] Derks 1998, 211-212.

[190] There may also have been times, on the other hand, when the space in the interior was considered to be hardly more sacred than the space outside it.

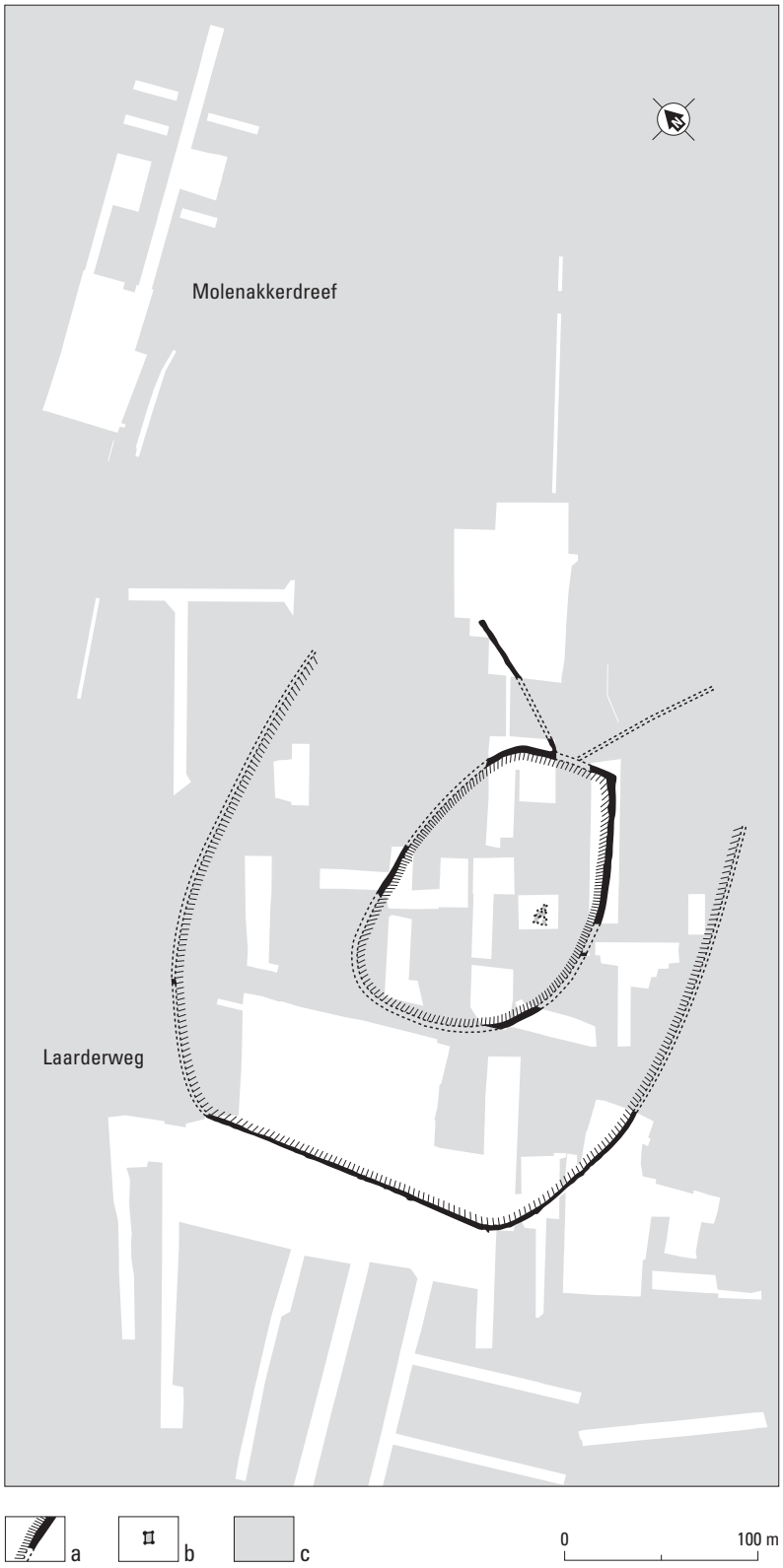

Fig. 4.19 Weert-Laarderweg. Late Iron Age double ditch-and-bank enclosure, during a phase pre-dating the native-Roman settlement. After Tol 1996a, fig. 2.2. a) ditch and bank; b) four-poster; c) not excavated.

regional importance, and where the cult would have been attended by representatives of sub-tribal or tribal groups. The best example of this is the sanctuary at Empel, which has been identified as one of the most important cult places in the territory of the Batavi.[191] Archaeologically, these supra-local cult places are of great importance, as they offer a view on social and political contexts that are almost completely absent in the other classes of data that are incorporated in this study. They indicate that local communities were never isolated from the wider world. They were part of more encompassing social collectives, which defined themselves similarly through ritual (and probably also non-ritual) practices, but which also provided an arena for the representation and manipulation of power and political competition.

To conclude, interpreting the ritual practices and the significance of cult places in terms of the socio-cosmic order remains largely out of reach because of the absence of votive inscriptions. However, it has been suggested that a first step can be made by distinguishing between cult places on the basis of their setting in the cultural landscape: enclosed cult places with funerary associations, enclosures and enclosed cult places within settlement contexts, and cult places whose sacred nature focused on prominent landscape features such as rivers and moors. While there is some evidence that enclosed cult places associated with funerary contexts were a feature of the landscape from the end of the Late Bronze Age onwards, the earliest evidence for cult places near farmsteads comes from the end of the Middle Iron Age (early third century BC). This may represent a differentiation in the ritual practices that were carried out at enclosed cult places, and the development of permanent structures for cults that did not focus on ancestors. The construction and use of a cult place would have presented a strong potential for the symbolic construction of cult communities. It is likely that most or all enclosed cult places functioned at the local level. Possibly, local communities, at least in some parts of the MDS region, defined themselves in terms of cult communities from the Middle Iron Age onwards, in a similar fashion as they had done in the Urnfield period as burial communities.

4.4 ARABLE LANDS, CELTIC FIELDS AND AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS

4.4.1 CELTIC FIELDS IN THE MEUSE-DEMER-SCHELDT REGION AND THE NORTHWEST EUROPEAN PLAIN

Celtic fields, the co-axial field systems which in the Northwest European Plain mostly take the form of extended clusters of square and rectangular fields separated by low earthen banks, have a long history of research.[192] Their distribution and morphological characteristics are fairly well known as a result of that research, but our understanding of the genesis and use of these field systems is still poor. No doubt this is because, with the shift from archaeological fieldwork in the former heathlands to the *essen*, the intensity of celtic field research declined greatly. The rise of celtic fields is sometimes associated with a phase of demographic expansion in the Urnfield period, and, consequently, a date in the Late Bronze Age is proposed for the beginning of the celtic field system.[193] Even though this date is not firmly established by evidence from celtic field research, it will be used here as well.

[191] Roymans/Derks 1994.

[192] Brongers 1976, 18-29 on the history of research.

[193] Zimmermann 1976, 79; Waterbolk 1985; Roymans 1991, 68; Taayke 1996, 187-188; Fokkens 1998, 119; Roymans/Gerritsen 2002. Others claim that celtic fields were primarily a feature of the period 600 BC to AD 200: Brongers 1976, 63-64; Behre 2000.

site name	description	reference
Nederweert	fragment of larger complex seen on aerial photographs, elevated ridges noted in fields	Bruekers 1996
Riethoven-Boshoven	several fragments of larger complex seen on aerial photographs	Milikowski 1985, fig. 4
Bladel	fragment of celtic field, seen on aerial photograph	unpublished, N. Roymans (pers. comm.)
Melderslo	fragment of celtic field	Renes 1999, 286
Peer-Maarlo	several fragments of larger complex seen on aerial photographs	Van Impe 1977, fig. 5
Gruitrode-Muisvennerheide	several fragments of larger complex seen on aerial photographs	Van Impe 1977, fig. 6
Lommel-Riebosserheide	several fragments of larger complex seen on aerial photographs	Vandekerchove 1995, fig. 3
Lommel-Blekerheide	fragment of larger complex seen on aerial photographs	Vanderkerchove 1995, figs. 3, 7
Lommel-S of Baalse Gracht	several fragments of larger complex seen on aerial photographs	Vanderkerchove 1995, fig. 4
Herent-Herenthoek/ St. Josefswijk	several fragments of larger complex seen on aerial photographs; around urnfield Neerpelt-Herent	Vanderkerchove 1995, fig. 5
Herent-Eikelbos/Hoeverheide	several fragments of larger complex seen on aerial photographs	Vanderkerchove 1995, fig. 5
Grote Brogel-Boscheller Heide	several fragments of larger complex seen on aerial photographs	Vanderkerchove 1995, figs. 6, 8
Neerpelt-Romeins Kerkhof	fragment of larger complex seen on aerial photographs; around urnfield Neerpelt-Roosen	Vanderkerchove 1995, fig. 8

Table 4.11 Celtic field complexes in the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region.

In contrast to research in the central and northeastern Netherlands and other parts of the Northwest European Plain, there have been few sustained efforts to identify remains of celtic fields in the MDS region. In the Dutch part of the study area, only a few isolated fragments of celtic fields are known (table 4.11).[194] These were discovered on aerial photographs of recently reclaimed fields. In the Belgian part of the MDS region, the study of celtic fields has been slightly more systematic. Aerial photographs from the northeastern part of the Belgian Kempen region have been successfully investigated for traces of celtic fields.[195] Several larger complexes and numerous isolated fragments showed up as soil marks in arable lands. Figure 4.20 shows the distribution of the known celtic fields in the MDS region. The distribution is seriously distorted by the unequal distribution of research efforts over the region, and the lack of celtic fields in most parts of the map can certainly not be taken as an indication of their absence. The map demonstrates, however, that celtic fields and the accompanying agricultural regime were an element of the late prehistoric landscape, as they were in the other Pleistocene coversand regions of the Northwest European Plain, the central and northeastern Netherlands, the northwest German *Geestinsel*, the western parts of Denmark and southern Scandinavia.[196]

Little can be said about the layout, size and development of the celtic fields in the MDS region. Given the formal similarities with celtic fields in other regions, however, there is reason to assume that those in the MDS area did not differ structurally from those that have been identified and studied in the central and northern Netherlands. This assumption raises the question to what extent it is possible to extrapolate evidence on field systems from other regions to say something about the field systems and agricultural regimes in the MDS region. During a phase of flourishing field systems research in the 1970s, one important research theme was the morphological aspects of celtic fields, and this resulted in a number of comparative studies that ranged from Scandinavia to Belgium and from Ireland to Germany.[197] In more

[194] Van Giffen (1939b, 89) claimed to know the locations of 19 celtic field complexes in the province of Noord-Brabant, but a list of these was never published and their locations are no longer known.

[195] Van Impe 1977; Vandekerchove 1994; idem 1995. A thesis by the last author on the analysis of aerial photographs of this region could not be consulted.

[196] Müller-Wille 1965; idem 1979; Brongers 1976; Myhre 1978; Bradley 1978; Zimmermann 1976.

[197] See the previous note for references.

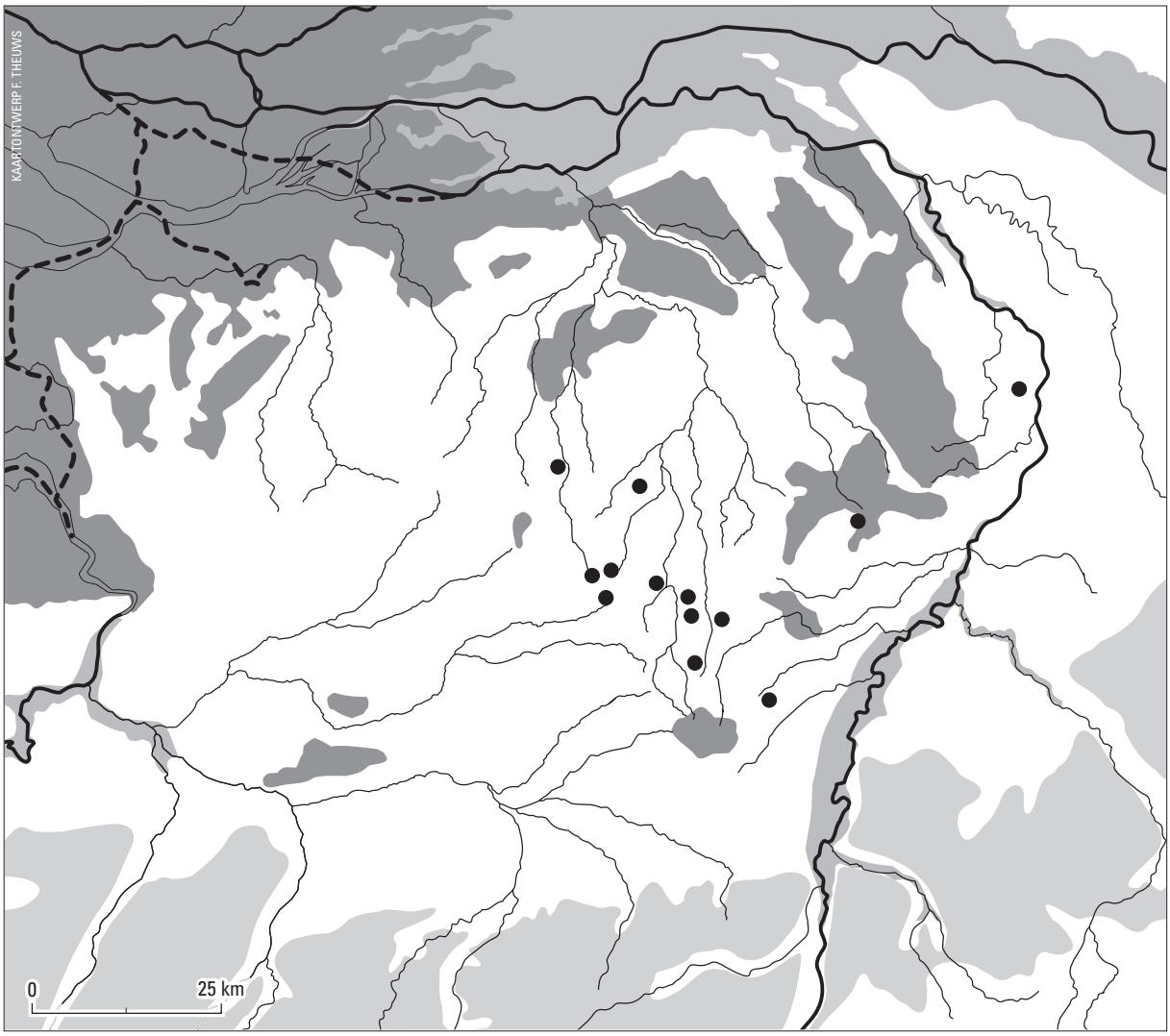

Fig. 4.20 Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region. Distribution of celtic fields observed on aerial photographs.

recent years, this cross-cultural approach has been invalidated by research that has indicated fundamental differences in the agricultural regimes in different regions, and has been replaced by a focus on regionally specific developments.[198] In the case of the MDS region, however, I would argue that a comparison with nearby regions with similar geomorphological conditions and a certain degree of cultural affinity is permissible. The central and northeastern Netherlands, and to a lesser extent the Pleistocene areas of northwestern Germany (Flögeln), more or less meet these conditions and as there has been significantly more celtic field research in those areas, they can provide useful insights into the uses and development of celtic fields in the MDS region.[199]

[198] E.g. Hiddink 1999, 157-166; De Hingh 2000.

[199] One potentially significant geomorphological difference between the MDS region and the northeastern Netherlands is that in the latter region there are extensive boulder clay formations, often within one metre from the surface, whereas this is absent in the south. This affects the hydrological conditions and the presence of pebbles and cobbles in the topsoil.

In this section, I will not go into the details of the range of cultivated crops, or the structural relationships between crop cultivation and animal husbandry. These subjects have been studied by others,[200] and even though there are many questions remaining, I will discuss the arable lands from another perspective. Given the question of the cultural construction of local communities with which this chapter is concerned, my primary goal is to understand celtic fields and other types of field systems in terms of their relationships to the communities that created and used them. For this it is important to understand the history of the transformation of uncultivated land into fields, as well as the phases of use, fallow and abandonment. Key insights can be derived from a diachronic perspective, which looks at the changes in the use of arable lands over the course of the last millennium BC and the beginning of the Roman period. I will return to issues of land use and settlement patterns in chapter 5.

4.4.2 ARABLE LANDS, FARMSTEADS AND BARROWS

Excavations at several sites in the central and northeastern Netherlands have revealed ground plans of Iron Age houses which were situated within or near the borders of celtic field complexes.[201] These plans constitute a minority of the known Iron Age farmhouse plans from those regions, but there is reason to believe that the pattern of farmsteads within or adjacent to the celtic fields was widespread. In most cases where celtic fields are not present around the houses, this can be understood as a result of post-depositional transformations. Later agricultural activities, perhaps from the Roman period onwards but mainly in the Middle Ages and in more recent periods, have undoubtedly destroyed the banks separating the fields. This is the case under the *essen*, where up to now celtic fields have rarely been recognised, and also in more recent reclamation zones. The zones of the premodern landscapes where the celtic field banks can be recognised, often as soil marks without any remaining elevation, are generally speaking the heathlands which were extensively exploited from the Late Iron Age or Roman period onwards.[202]

The site of Peelo-Kleuvenveld in Drenthe presents a case in point (fig. 4.21). Until the early part of the 20th century, this site formed part of a heathland zone. Reclamation activities which disturbed the top 25 to 30 centimetres of the soil took part in the early decades of that century. In 1937 Van Giffen investigated a threatened group of Iron Age barrows.[203] The barrows are of the *brandheuvel* type, whereby the mound is erected over the remains of the pyre and the cremated bones. This type is generally dated to the Middle and Late Iron Age,[204] although at Peelo this could not be ascertained by artefacts or radiocarbon dates. It is unknown whether the banks of a celtic field in the direct vicinity of the barrows were still visible on the ground at the time of the barrow investigations, but they were not observed on aerial photographs until the 1970s.[205] Renewed analysis of the section drawings of the barrows indicate that at least two barrows may have been situated on top of celtic field banks. This suggests that the barrows were erected in a part of the celtic field which had been given up for cultivation.[206]

[200] Roymans 1990, 95-115; Fokkens 1998, 119-122, 137-145; Bakels 1998; De Hingh 2000.

[201] Apart from the sites discussed in the text these include Zeijen-Noordse Veld (Van Giffen 1949b; idem 1950; Waterbolk 1977); Sellingen-Zuidveld (Van Giffen 1939b, 86-93; Müller-Wille 1965, 217, fig. 85a); Vaassen (Brongers 1972; idem 1976, 40-55); Lunteren (Verwers 1972, 87, figure 57; Van Klaveren n.d., cited in Schinkel 1998, 172-174, figs. 153, 154).

[202] See also chapter 5.

[203] Van Giffen published two barrows (1939a, 128-129, fig. 13); Kooi 1995/1996, 442-453.

[204] Waterbolk 1962; Kooi 1979, 153-156; Taayke 1990, 105; idem 1995, 69.

[205] Brongers 1976; Kooi 1995/1996, 418. Fig. 4.21 Peelo-Kleuvenveld (Drenthe). Celtic field complex (dark grey, observed on aerial photographs) with excavation trenches (white), settlement remains (black) and Middle and Late Iron Age burial monuments. After Kooi 1995/1996, figs. 2, 4 and 6.

Fig. 4.21 Peelo-Kleuvenveld (Drenthe). Celtic field complex (dark gray, observed on air photographs) with excavations trenches (white), settlement remains (black) and Middle and Late Iron Age burial monuments. After Kooi 1995/1996, figs. 2, 4 and 6.

In the 1980s, small-scale salvage excavations took place to the north and southwest of the barrows. Three plans of houses were excavated, of which two dated to the Early Iron Age or early Middle Iron Age and one to the Late Iron Age.[207] Granaries and pits were found as well. Comparison of the excavated remains with aerial photographs showed that the farmhouses had been situated within fields surrounded by celtic field banks, and at four places in the excavated trenches layers of sand were found which were interpreted as remains of the banks. Had there been no possibility of comparing the excavated remains with aerial photographs, or if recent ploughing had gone deeper into the soil, it is unlikely that these layers would have been recognised as the remains of a celtic field, and the context of the farmhouses and barrows would not have been understood.

A very similar pattern has been observed at Hijken in Drenthe.[208] There too, a group of Middle Iron Age houses could be associated spatially and temporally with the banks and fields of a celtic field. Remains of fences dividing up square and rectangular areas were found between and around the plans of the farmhouses, in places which later became the banks of the celtic field. At least one of a nearby

[206] Kooi 1995/1996, 453.

[207] Kooi 1995/1996, 420-434. The dates are based on typological grounds, and on a ^{14}C date from one of the early houses: (GrN-12341: 2445±35 BP; 770-400 cal BC (2 sigma)).

[208] Harsema 1974; idem 1980b and 1991.

group of barrows, investigated in the 1930s long before the excavations of the farmhouses, was erected on top of a bank of the celtic field.[209]

The patterns at Peelo and Hijken and at several other sites suggest that there were close spatial associations between farmsteads, fields and cemeteries.[210] Farmsteads appear to have been located within or on the edges of the field complexes and to have shifted periodically within the arable lands.[211] Even though it has been impossible up to now to establish similar relationships between celtic fields and Iron Age farmsteads in the MDS region, it is not likely that the situation there differed fundamentally.

4.4.3 CELTIC FIELD AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS AND THE DYNAMIC USE OF ARABLE LANDS

A dynamic element can be brought into this static model by incorporating our understanding of the wandering nature of farmsteads in the Iron Age and the average size of local communities in this period (see section 4.2.5). On this basis, I will suggest and discuss several options for the genesis and use of celtic fields.

Field systems in the Netherlands and northwestern Germany do not cover the thousands of hectares that have been recorded in the British Isles, but several examples of more than 100 hectares are known. Sizes between 50 and 100 hectares are quite common.[212] The largest, but no doubt incompletely recorded, celtic fields in the MDS region indicate that this size range can be assumed for the study area as well.[213] The fragmentary state of preservation and the unequal visibility of the soil marks on aerial photographs in recently ploughed, fallow or cultivated fields means that the original borders can often not be established accurately, and size estimates for many of the smaller celtic field complexes should be regarded as an absolute minimum. On the other hand, recent large-scale excavations under the *essen* indicate that settled areas were often situated in the vicinity of small peat-filled depressions, and it is likely that there were also areas within celtic field complexes which were too wet to be used for cultivation.[214]

The combination of the general size range of celtic fields and the size range of local communities (3-6 households) indicates that, in theory, there would have been 10 to 25 hectares of arable land available for each household in a celtic field of average size.[215] This makes it immediately clear that not all the fields of a celtic field could have been cultivated in one and the same year. Even if that had been possible in

[209] Hijken barrow 23 (Harsema 1974, 165). Several barrows (26, 28 to 32) at the Noordse Veld at Zeijen (fig. 4.24) were erected on top of the banks of a celtic field (Waterbolk 1977, 178).

[210] Harsema 1980b, 96-97.

[211] See also chapter 3.

[212] E.g., Flögeln (ca. 100 hectares: Zimmermann 1976, 84). Brongers (1976, 67, table 3) lists estimates of 104, 165, and 189 hectares from several examples from the Emmen-Odoorn region in Drenthe. The average size of a group of eleven celtic fields in this region is 79 hectares. Other well-investigated celtic fields are Zeijen-Noordse Veld (min. 70 hectares, Waterbolk 1977, fig. 1), Hijken (90 ha, Harsema 1982, 154) and Vaassen (min. 76 ha, Brongers 1976).

[213] Vanderkerchove 1995, 73, figs. 3 and 6: an absolute minimum for the celtic field of the Riebosserheide is 1050 by 420 metres or 44 hectares, that of the Boscheller Heide 525 x 630 metres or 33 hectares. Sizes above 50 hectares are likely.

[214] When Van Giffen recorded the celtic field at Sellingen-Zuidveld in Groningen, he noted that the complex was interrupted in several places by wet depressions (Van Giffen 1939b, fig. 3; cf. Müller-Wille 1965, 217, fig. 85a for a more complete plan based on aerial photographs).

[215] Vaassen, which appears to be of an average size, can serve as an example: 76 hectares for three to six families means about 12 to 25 hectares per household. If we assume that the wide banks separating the fields did not function in the agricultural system, the arable land would constitute about 55 hectares, which means about 9 to 18 hectares per household.

terms of agricultural sustainability, the available labour in a local community would never have sufficed. It is probable that with the available labour only a small fraction of the celtic field could be cultivated in a given year, but estimates to substantiate this are difficult to make. Some have approached the problem by calculating the amount of land needed to produce enough crops to feed a household or local community and save seeding grain for subsequent years. Fokkens, for example, suggests that even with low yield estimates, an area of four hectares would have sufficed to supply the crops needed by a household within a dietary regime which consisted only of cultivated crops.[216] While such estimates contain an uncomfortably large element of uncertainty, they consistently sketch a picture of cultivated areas that are quite small in comparison to the available land in a celtic field.

Assuming that the fields that were cultivated in a given year in a celtic field were those in the vicinity of the farmsteads, it is likely that the wandering farmstead pattern was an integral element of the celtic field system. Perhaps about once every generation, a set of fields was given up, and another was taken into cultivation, thereby creating a system with very long periods of fallow. Within a long-term perspective of the whole use life of a celtic field, this means that the agricultural system was extensive: small parts of the celtic field were under cultivation while large parts lay fallow for long periods of time. In other words, the total amount of labour spent on the cultivation of a particular field during its total use life was low.

The extensive character of the celtic field system does not necessarily conflict with notions of intensification that are sometimes associated with the development of celtic fields.[217] Seen within the shorter time frame of the duration of use of a group of fields around a farmstead, cultivation practices may well have been quite intensive. There are some indications that manuring became increasingly important in comparison to the Bronze Age, and this probably represents a form of intensification.[218] On this scale, too, one has to expect short periods of fallow when the fertility of the intensively cultivated fields was given a chance to regenerate. The model presented here, then, assumes the existence of both short fallow periods of one or two years within the small segments of a celtic field near farmsteads, and long fallow periods of one or several human generations in the celtic field system as a whole. I would stress, however, that the celtic field system cannot be understood properly if the wandering farmstead pattern is not taken into account, and that the long-term perspective in which celtic fields are used extensively is a key element in this understanding.

If this gives us a rough idea of the way celtic fields were used, it does not yet explain how and why celtic fields as we recognise them today from the banks surrounding the fields developed. How do they differ from the agricultural system of the Bronze Age – equally thought to be characterised by shifting fields - if intensification is not the explanation? Basically, to address this problem, it is necessary to understand how, when and why the banks between the fields were formed. There has been a considerable amount of discussion about these questions, but the lack of sizeable excavations within celtic fields whose

[216] Fokkens 1998, 137-147, table 25. He also included in his calculations estimates for the size of land needed for pasture, sod cutting, wood and fodder. The greatest question marks with these calculations are with the crop yields of the celtic field system. While many assume sowing to crop ratios of 1:3 or 1:4 (1998, 141), Fokkens suggests that 1:10 is more likely. He uses quantitative data from Reynolds' experiments at Butser farm, which were done on very poor soils (Fokkens 1998, 141-142; Reynolds 1987). In these experiments average yields for wheat and spelt were above 1:30; the lowest were 1:7.

[217] De Hingh 1998; idem 2000; Behre 2000.

[218] De Hingh 1998; idem 2000. An indication of the use of manure is the presence of nitrogen-loving weeds in macro-botanical samples from Iron Age settlements. High nitrogen levels may have resulted from the use of animal dung on the fields. It is not clear whether grazing animals on fallow fields could have produced these levels or whether manure collected elsewhere must have been spread over the fields.

banks have been preserved remains a major problem.[219] An old idea is that the banks were initially created by moving rocks and tree stumps to the edges of the fields. Over centuries of use of the fields, the banks would gradually have grown as weeds and stubble or, according to some hypotheses, even the exhausted topsoil was removed from the fields and deposited on the banks.[220] There are a number of problems with this model which suggest that it does not describe fully the celtic field system. Brongers, for example, calculated that the amount of soil contained in the banks was more than could have been taken from the fields.[221] This means that material - organic or mineral - must have been brought in from outside, and this only makes sense if it was part of the agricultural system, presumably as a way of delaying soil degeneration processes. Zimmermann and Gebhart demonstrated that the phosphate levels of the banks in Flögeln were much higher than those of the fields themselves.[222] The first author suggests that large amounts of animal manure were brought onto the banks and hypothesises that, in a final stage of the use of the celtic field, cultivation took place on the banks rather than in the fields. In an earlier stage of use, the celtic field system would have been based on regular replacement and mixing of the exhausted soil from the fields with newly brought in mineral and organic material. Fokkens, too, suggests that the banks functioned in a system in which sods, manure and exhausted soil were mixed and moved from bank to field and vice versa.[223]

Recent research in the Noordse Veld at Zeijen in Drenthe (fig. 4.22) appears to confirm the suggestion that, in a late stage of the celtic field system, cultivation took place on the banks rather than in between them.[224] Micro-morphological and palynological analyses of a section through a bank and field indicated that the build-up of the bank progressed slowly throughout the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. The major part of the build-up took place from the Middle Iron Age onwards. At this stage, the bank was also used for cultivation, and during the Late Iron Age and Early Roman period, the banks appear to have been intensively manured, judging from the high phosphate levels in the top of the bank. Not only, then, does this research support Zimmermann's hypothesis of cultivation on the banks, it also indicates that the use and greatest development of the banks was a late phenomenon in the celtic field system. Paradoxical as it sounds, the use of the banks should perhaps be regarded as an element of the system that replaced the celtic field system rather than as a characteristic of celtic field agriculture itself.[225]

A model of a transition from a dynamic, early system to a more stable, late system in which the banks were cultivated goes some way toward explaining the celtic field phenomenon, but cannot be more than a single, very general, model. It is possible to suggest different models that describe the way celtic fields as we see them today developed, and even though it is not possible to evaluate these models thoroughly at present, they may help to guide the way we think about celtic fields. In fact, I will suggest that the question of *the* right model is inappropriate in this case, as there are indications that the genesis and use of celtic fields consisted of differentiated processes, varying not only between regions, but also within celtic fields.

A first scenario is that the banks form an integral element of the celtic field system and begin to develop very soon after the land is taken into cultivation (fig. 4.23a). After one phase of use (i.e. a period of about a human generation during which there is an inhabited farmstead in the vicinity) occupation and

[219] Lindquist 1974; Brongers 1976; Zimmermann 1976; Gebhart 1976; Harsema 1980b, 95; Fokkens 1998, 119-121. See also Hiddink 1999, 164-166; Spek et al. in press.

[220] Van Giffen 1939a, 136 (on the removal of exhausted soil); Brongers 1976, 60; Harsema 1980b, 95; Waterbolk 1995, 15.

[221] Brongers 1976, 60-62.

[222] Zimmermann 1976; Gebhart 1976.

[223] Fokkens 1998, 119-121.

[224] Spek et al. in press. This was a multi-disciplinary research project including soil survey, soil micro-morphology, phosphate analysis and palynology.

[225] In this respect, my view differs from the one recently presented by Behre (2000), who sees the cultivation of the banks as the primary characteristic of the celtic field system. Cf. Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

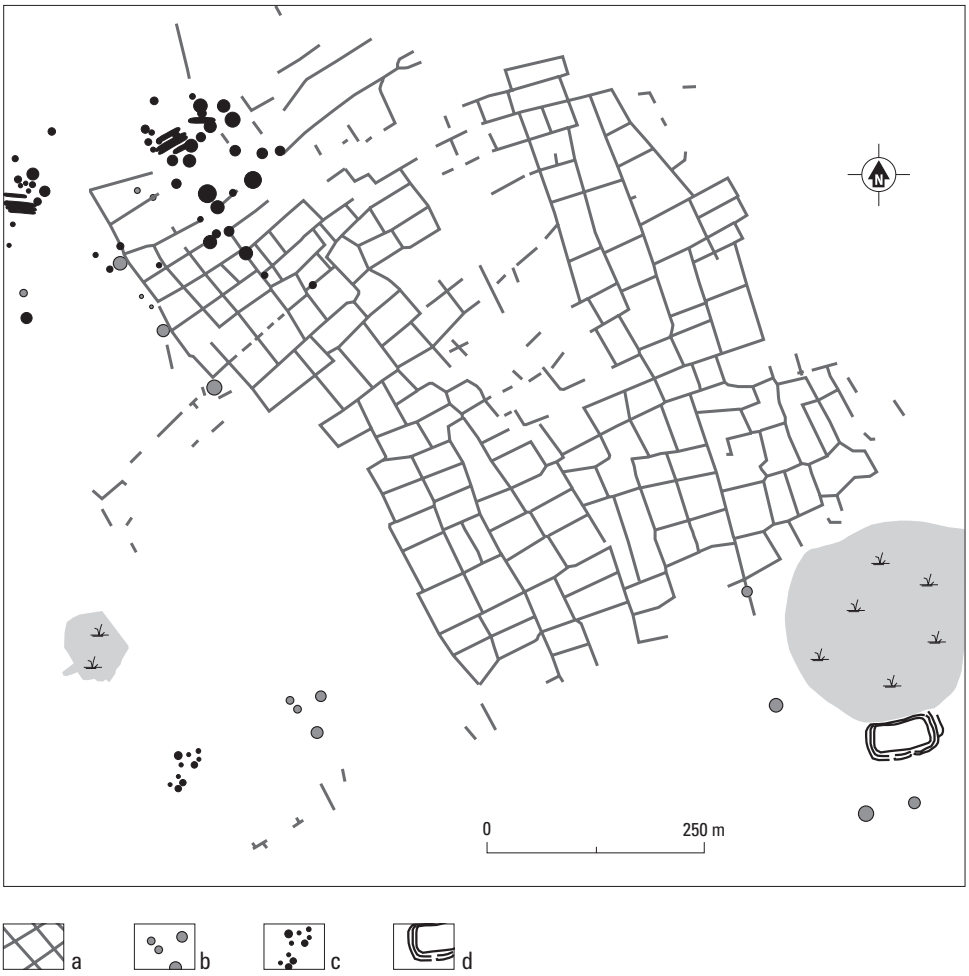

Fig. 4.22 Noordse Veld at Zeijen (Drenthe). Celtic field complex with Middle Bronze Age barrows and urnfield. After Waterbolk 1977, fig. 1. a) banks of celtic field; b) Middle Bronze Age barrows; c) Unrfield period and later graves; d) Late Iron Age enclosure Zeijen.

cultivation move to a nearby location, leaving behind an area with fully developed banks. According to this scenario, what we see today is the end result of a highly dynamic system, in which particular plots of land were used only during one or maybe two phases in the entire use life of a celtic field.

A second scenario is that the banks represent a very specific, and short-lived use of the celtic fields, one that has to be distinguished from the regular system that was practised over a much longer period (fig. 4.23b). This took place in a late phase of the use of a celtic field, when in order to keep up soil fertility the agricultural system needed to be supplemented by manuring with animal dung and possibly sods. It is largely in this late phase that the banks were formed and played a role in the agricultural system.

Thirdly, one can think of a scenario whereby the banks developed very gradually (fig. 4.23c). While the system was dynamic, the occasional return to a location within the celtic field for a new phase of occupation and cultivation led over time to the banks that characterise the celtic fields as we see them today. Possibly, the gradual heightening of the banks was accompanied by a process of subdivision, whereby elongated parcels were divided up and finally took on the characteristic checkerboard form.

In my opinion none of these scenarios describe *the* genesis and development of celtic fields in the Northwest European Plain, but all three are relevant. Combinations or intermediate scenarios can be

envisaged as well. The first scenario may appear the most unlikely. If locations were under cultivation only for one or two phases, one would expect celtic fields to be much larger than they are. Moreover, the excavations at Hijken have shown that at least from the Middle Iron Age onwards farmsteads were regularly built in locations that had been occupied at most one or two centuries previously.[226] However, the likelihood that the cultivation phase was a short-lived affair for particular sections of a celtic field and that the fields were soon abandoned should not be neglected. It is obvious that differences in hydrological conditions, proneness to wind erosion or other elements led to great variation in the agricultural potential of different parts of a celtic field. Parts that proved to be unsuitable or that were over-cultivated may have been given up long before the use life of the celtic field as a whole came to an end. There are some indications that the early abandonment of a section of a celtic field was not always solely a matter of the poor agricultural qualities of the soil. At Hijken, Peelo, Zeijen and the Balloër Veld, Middle or Late Iron Age barrows were erected over a bank, apparently in a disused section of a celtic field. Possibly, but this is no more than speculation, the abandonment of the fields was related to the death of the persons buried inside the celtic field complex.[227]

The recent research by Spek and colleagues described above fits the second scenario of a long period of use of a celtic field in which the banks remained low, followed by a relatively short period in which the banks became the focus of cultivation and gained most of their height. Even though at Hijken the starting date of the formation of the banks is unknown, it is clear that this phase was preceded by a period in which there were no banks but the fields were separated by fences. This pre-bank phase is associated by the excavator with the Middle Iron Age farmhouses that were found,[228] and if this is correct, the excavated part of the Hijken celtic field would be another example of a late and relatively fast development of the banks. Interestingly, the fences separating the fields in the earlier phase could be matched up with later banks identified on aerial photographs. This suggests, at least for this section of the celtic field, a certain degree of continuity in the location of fields and field boundaries.

A major problem with the second scenario as a general model is that if correct, it means that all celtic fields found today were still in use during a late phase of the celtic field system, in the Early Roman period as the Noordse Veld investigations suggest or maybe in the Late Iron Age. Celtic fields that were given up in an earlier phase, before the banks became an essential element of the agricultural system, would not have had the pronounced differences between fields and banks that make them recognisable to us. In other words, according to this scenario, we would only find those celtic fields which were used until the Late Iron Age or even the Roman period, and this to me does not appear likely. As will be discussed more fully in chapter 5, a major contraction of farmsteads and settlement territories took place in the later part of the Iron Age and the early Roman period. The settlement evidence indicates that significant zones of the MDS landscape were given up for habitation and presumably also for cultivation from the Middle Iron Age onwards. These are especially the heathland zones of the pre-modern landscape, in other words, the zones of the landscape from which all or practically all celtic fields are known. I do not want to argue that the settlement data preclude the possibility that some celtic fields or the banks within them were still used in the Early Roman period – the evidence collected by Zimmermann and Spek is convincing in itself – but I would hesitate to generalise their findings for the genesis and development of banks within all celtic fields in the Northwest European Plain. Nevertheless, for some celtic fields and sections of celtic fields a scenario in which the formation of the banks is largely related to a specific agricultural system and late phase of use should be considered.

[226] Harsema 1974. If the hypothesis that farmsteads were generally located within celtic fields is correct, then a site such as Someren in the MDS region also supports the idea that parts of a celtic fields were occupied and used during multiple, separated phases (Kortlang 1999).

[227] See also section 4.4.5.

[228] Harsema 1982, caption to fig. 8.

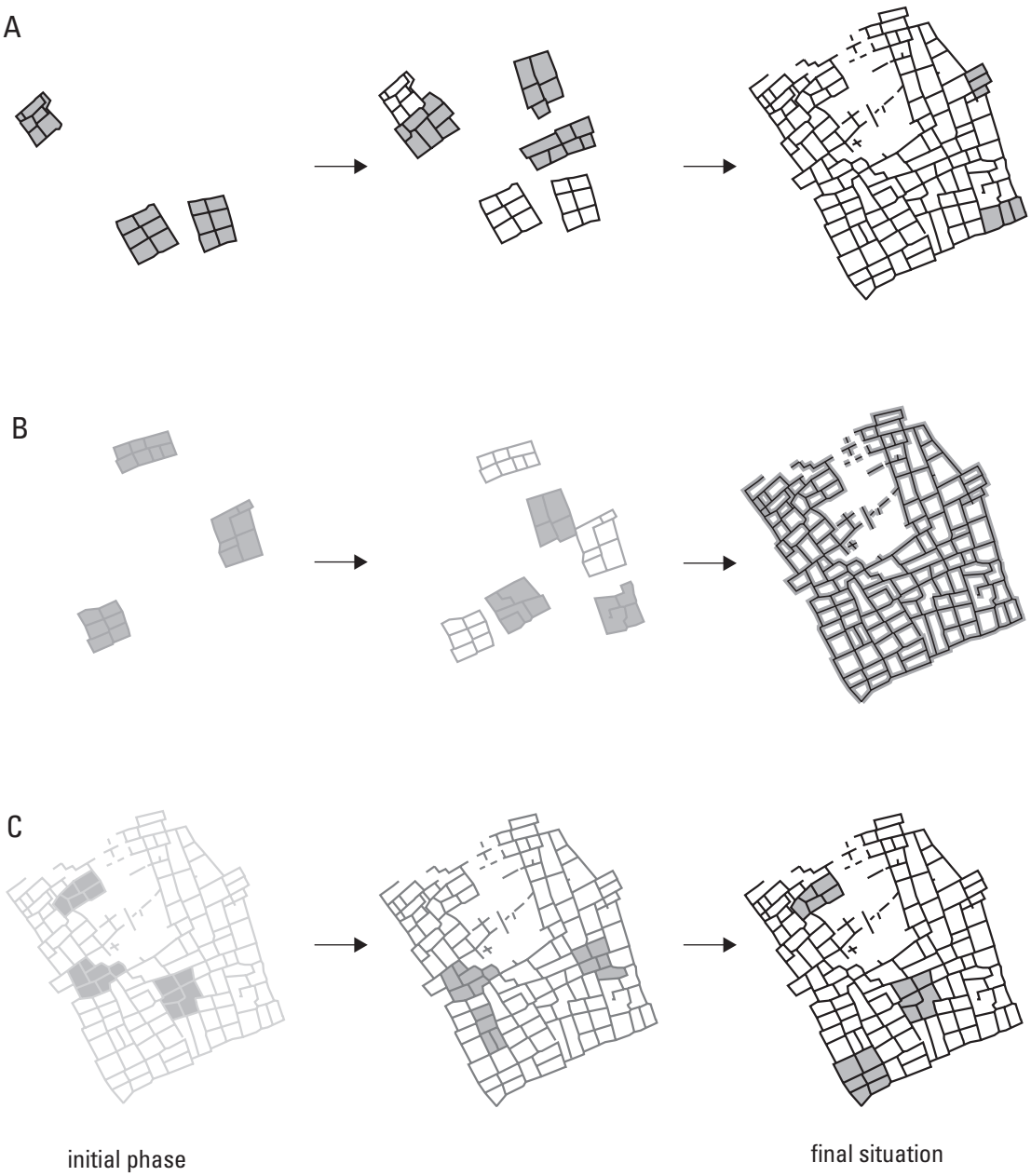

Fig. 4.23 Schematic representation of three models for the development of a celtic field complex. Grey area: field in use; white: fallow/uncultivated; grey line: low bank; black line: full-fledged bank. Model A: the banks develop to their full height after one phase of cultivation, and the celtic field is the result of a highly dynamic cultivation system; B: the banks remain quite low during most of the period of use of the celtic field complex. They only become pronounced in a late phase of use, when the banks themselves are cultivated and material is brought onto the banks; C: the banks develop gradually and grow to their final height in the course of numerous phases of cultivation separated by fallow.

The third scenario, of a gradual accumulation of material and build-up of banks between the fields, may intuitively appear to be the most appropriate, even though the evidence discussed above indicates that it is not suitable as a general model. It does not rely on unexpectedly rapid or late bank formation processes, and it appears to fit the settlement evidence from, for example, Hijken. The observations by Brongers and others, that the layout of some celtic fields is characterised by long banks going in one direction and much shorter banks perpendicular to this dominant direction fits this scenario as

well.[229] It suggests that some form of planning took place, whereby initially a large area was reclaimed and divided into elongated parallel strips, which were subsequently split up in smaller units. This notion of a practice of subdividing larger units is confirmed by some excavation evidence. In the centre of a rectangular field surrounded by banks within the celtic field of Sellingen-Zuidveld, Van Giffen excavated an Early Iron Age farmhouse which lay underneath a bank that divided the rectangular field into two halves.[230]

As is hopefully clear by now, at present no thorough evaluation of these three scenarios can be made. The evidence does not support a single model for the development of celtic fields, and while this is possibly a result of the small scale of most investigations, I would suggest that the variations in the evidence reflect the highly differentiated development of celtic fields and sections within celtic fields. The particular histories of parts of a celtic field, which consisted of a specific sequence including potentially one or more phases of cultivation, habitation, bank formation, subdivision, long-term fallow, use as burial ground, and abandonment, indicate that the rather undifferentiated end result that we see as archaeologists came about in very differentiated ways.

4.4.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW AGRICULTURAL REGIME IN THE LATER PART OF THE IRON AGE AND THE ROMAN PERIOD

So far, I have discussed celtic fields as a phenomenon of the last millennium BC without going into the problem of the end date of the celtic field system. This question has been addressed by several archaeologists, but to date there has been no consensus.[231] Proposed dates range from the later part of the Iron Age to the 2nd century AD or even later.[232] In the light of the conclusions of the previous section, this diversity is not surprising. One of the main problems of dating is caused by the fact that there is not necessarily a direct relationship between the celtic field agricultural system and the celtic fields. The closing date of a celtic field may post-date the end of the celtic field system proper by centuries. When there is evidence of a native-Roman settlement near a celtic field, the possibility that the arable complex continued to be used but under a different agricultural regime should certainly be considered.

A major problem with establishing the time when the celtic field system was replaced by something else is that we have extremely little evidence for later field systems. Post-celtic-field field systems are practically unknown from the MDS region or other sandy landscapes of the Northwest European Plain until the High Middle Ages. Some fragmentary information comes from Oss. The large-scale excavations there have not revealed indications for the presence of celtic field complexes around the Iron Age farmsteads, but from the Late Iron Age onwards land divisions by ditches begin to appear.[233] While the picture of how the inhabited spaces and the fields were divided and bounded is still very incomplete, it has become clear that the ditch systems were constructed on a large scale, connecting nucleated settlements hundreds of metres apart and dividing up the land in between.[234] Ditches are a recurring feature at sites from the last part of the Iron Age and the Early Roman period, but only the Oss excavations have been extensive enough to establish that these ditches were not only part of the settlement areas, but also of the arable complexes.[235]

[229] Brongers 1976, 57-58.

[230] Van Giffen 1939b, 86-93, figs. 3-4.

[231] Hiddink has recently summarised the problems encountered by scholars trying to establish the final date of celtic fields (1999, 165).

[232] Brongers 1976, 63-64; Zimmermann 1976, 86.

[233] Schinkel argued on the basis of variable house orientations that it is unlikely that the Iron Age farmsteads were situated within the bounds of a celtic field (1998, 179-181).

[234] Fokkens 1996, 208-209, figures 4, 5, 6d and e; Wesselingh 2000, 194-195, fig. 211-212.

[235] See section 4.5 for enclosures and ditch systems in settlement contexts.

Indirect leads for the dating of the end of the celtic field system are provided by the changes in the settlement patterns over the course of the last millennium BC. I will postpone a fuller discussion, therefore, until section 5.4.2.

4.4.5 LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND ARABLE LANDS

Archaeologists studying prehistoric field systems in northwestern Europe have generally paid more attention to the morphological, chronological and agricultural aspects of the field systems than to the social context in which they arose.[236] For this study it is relevant to ask whether the arable land, and in particular the celtic fields, can be understood as an element in the symbolic construction of local communities, in the sense in which urnfields, cult places and nucleated settlements may have fulfilled those roles during different phases within the last millennium BC. With the present data set on field systems, this question cannot be answered, and it is not easy to see what kind of evidence may be found that supports or invalidates such a hypothesis. I would argue, though, that arable complexes had an equally large potential to be an element in and a representation of the construction and self-definition of communities as urnfields and cult places, albeit of a different nature. There are several strands that lead to such an argumentation, some theoretical, some based on the archaeological evidence.

First it needs to be established that celtic fields, even though characterised by internal boundaries, cannot be understood in a model of permanent claims by individual families, let alone of privately owned land. The pattern of wandering farmsteads and the dynamic and extensive nature of the use of celtic fields, as well as by the evidence suggesting that the formation of the banks was more a function of the agricultural system than of a desire to control human access to an area of land, make individual land ownership unlikely. It is much more likely that the claims by a local community were dominant, and that rights to part of the arable land were allocated to households on a temporary basis, possibly connected to construction and abandonment phases of farmsteads.[237] The dominance of the collective claims to the arable land also makes most sense in a model of a territorially divided landscape: even though the celtic field or the arable land would have made up only a small proportion of a settlement territory, its importance for the subsistence economy and the survival of the local group suggests (to a 21st century archaeologist at least) that it was a focal point in the expression of claims to the territory as a whole. Even though it may have been within the local community that individual claims were staked out or even that competition for the best land occurred, to the outside world the collective ownership would have been stressed. This is exactly how symbols function in the construction of communities, by establishing boundaries that divide the insiders, in this case people who can claim rights to the arable land, from the outsiders, those who have no such entitlement.[238]

The objection could be made at this point that the extensive and wandering patterns of occupation and land use meant that there was no such feature as *the* arable complex of a settlement territory. If the cultivated fields were dispersed and non-permanent, can one speak at all of communally-held arable land that potentially functioned as a element in the construction of the community? In my opinion, yes. I have described above how the development of a celtic field would have been a highly differentiated and long-term process, but given the nature of the celtic field system, not only the cultivated or fallow fields

[236] There are exceptions, notably the work by Fleming on co-axial field systems in the British Isles (Fleming 1985; idem 1989 and 1998). See also De Hingh (1998) for the MDS region.

[237] Cf. chapter 6; cf. Roymans/Theuws 1999, 13-15.

[238] There are many ethnographic examples that suggest that the definition of social groups and the collective claims to land are closely connected. Well-known are the Merina of Madagascar in this respect, where the *deme* has been described as primarily a land-holding unit (Bloch 1975).

would have been an element of the landscape of a settlement territory, but also the land cultivated by previous generations of a community. The celtic field system had a lasting impact on the landscape. It involved the formation of banks between the fields, which even when they remained low would have become a conspicuous and permanent element of the landscape, if not to strangers then certainly to the knowledgeable inhabitants of the territory. Moreover, it is likely that parts of a celtic field that were in a phase of long-term fallow were used for grazing animals, and this means that there was little chance for forest regeneration on those parts. Pollen evidence, scarce as it is, instead suggests a continuous process of an opening-up of the landscape and an expansion of heathlands.[239] This probably means that particular vegetation spectra associated with formerly cultivated soils would also have indicated to the inhabitants where cultivation had taken place in the past.

It follows that – even though at a particular point in time only small segments of the settlement territory were under cultivation – the inhabitants could have recognised something as the community's arable complex, especially after habitation and cultivation had taken place continuously for several centuries. In fact, the landscape, with its diverse mosaic of cultivated fields bordering on temporarily or permanently abandoned parts of the celtic field, would have reflected the history of occupation of the community, and the ongoing relationship between the community and the territory. In that way, I think that it is quite likely that the celtic field acted as a symbol for the local community, its social boundaries, and its historical relationship with the land.[240] Of course, this is not to say that it was always perceived in those terms and certainly not that the celtic field system was organised in such a way as to be used in the cultural construction of the community. During seasonal or yearly rituals, and especially at times when the claims to the territory were contested, this link may have been given expression, whereas at other times it may have been a much more unconsciously experienced notion.

As a final observation it is worthwhile to note that there are cases when a conceptual link between the arable land and the ancestors was given direct and highly visible expression through spatial associations between celtic fields, barrows and cemeteries. This can take several forms. There are examples in which the banks of a celtic field took older burial monuments as their point of departure. At the Noordse Veld at Zeijen, for example, the western border of the celtic field is formed by a line of at least three Middle Bronze Age barrows, each of which was taken as a meeting point for banks coming from perpendicular directions (fig. 4.22).[241] In Vaassen a small cluster of earlier barrows is located in the centre of the celtic field. To the north the dominant orientation of the highest and presumably oldest banks is north-south, whereas to the south an east-west orientation predominates.[242] In other examples, barrows are constructed within abandoned sections of a celtic field and fairly commonly also on top of banks or even on the intersection of banks. There are examples of this from the Noordse Veld, Hijken, Peelo and the Balloër Veld.

[239] Cf. 5.4.

[240] Again, this pattern can also be found in many ethnographic cases of agricultural communities as well as hunter-gatherers (E.g., De Coppet 1985; Toren 1995; Århem 1998, Brown 1998, Carrier 1998;Visser 1998).

[241] Waterbolk 1977, 6-8, figure 1, barrows 75, 111 and 112.

[242] Brongers 1976, 57, plate 15.

4.5 SETTLEMENT NUCLEATION

4.5.1 INTRODUCTION

Section 3.2.3 discussed the gradual appearance of stable farmsteads during the later part of the Iron Age, farmsteads which remained in a certain location for the duration of several building phases of the farmhouse. At this point the theme of changing habitation patterns in the later Iron Age will be picked up again, in order to discuss the appearance of nucleated and enclosed settlements.

In a 1991 article, Jan Slofstra analysed the settlement system of the Early Roman period up to AD 70 by distinguishing between small rural settlements, enclosed settlements and rural centres.[243] The first two categories consist of small clusters of stable farmsteads, two to four in the case of small rural settlements and at most six or seven in the case of enclosed settlements. Two well-known examples of nucleated and enclosed settlements that existed in the Early Roman period are Oss-Westerveld and Hoogeloon. Oss-Westerveld was excavated between 1980 and 1984.[244] About two-thirds of this settlement of about 7.5 hectares could be investigated, and within that area over 40 plans of farmhouses were found, a small number of which pre-dated the Roman period. It is assumed that the native-Roman settlement varied in size. In the 1st century AD it may have grown from four to about eight to eleven contemporaneous farmsteads.[245] The settlement was surrounded by an enclosure of two ditches four metres apart. Originally, these would have been 60 to 100 centimetres deep. The initial digging of the ditches has been dated to the first half of the 1st century AD.[246] Within the enclosure, some of the yards were bounded by smaller ditches. The settlement appears to have been continuously inhabited until the early 3rd century AD. One of the reasons for Slofstra to include Oss-Westerveld in the top category of the rural settlement hierarchy is the construction late in the 1st century AD or in the course of the second century of a byre-house with what appears to have been a *porticus*-like construction.[247] This building has been interpreted as a romanised farmhouse, presumably the residence of a local chief.

In some ways Hoogeloon is a similar settlement (fig. 4.24, showing the pre-villa phase).[248] Founded during the 1st century AD and inhabited until the middle of the 3rd century, the settlement consisted of a total of 30 farmhouses that represent the occupation of six or seven farmsteads. The settlement of about 3 hectares was surrounded by a single ditch of a metre deep. At the exact location of a 1st century AD byre-house that was rebuilt on one occasion, a villa was constructed in the early part of the second century, representing the only villa from the core of the sandy MDS landscape known to date. In this phase of occupation, the ditched enclosure around the settlement had been back-filled and gone out of use.

These and similar enclosed and open settlements have strongly influenced our understanding of the Roman period in the MDS region as a nucleated settlement landscape,[249] even though there are also indications from Someren that dispersed and wandering farmsteads occurred as well during the 1st century AD. There is reason to believe, however, that the development towards nucleation and enclosure had their roots in the pre-Roman period. The evidence for both developments will be briefly presented in separate sections, followed by a discussion of the possible relationships between settlement and local community.

243 Slofstra 1991b, 145-157.

244 Van der Sanden 1987a, 61-66; Wesselingh 2000, 71-169.

245 Wesselingh 2000, 160-168, figs. 187-192.

246 Wesselingh 2000, 123-124, 158.

247 This is house 78; Van der Sanden 1987a, 64-65; Slofstra 1991b, 149-150; Wesselingh 2000, 78, 82-83, 134.

248 Slofstra 1991b, 148-165, esp. 148-149, 161, figures 12, 22.

249 Other enclosed or partially enclosed native-Roman rural settlements include Neerharen-Rekem (which later developed into a villa settlement, De Boe 1985), Riethoven (Slofstra/Lammers/Aarts 1993). At Donk, the excavations did not make it clear whether the settlement had been enclosed, but it may have included a romanised building at one point during its occupation (Van Impe 1983b; Van Impe/Strobbe/Vynckier 1984; Slofstra 1991b, 163).

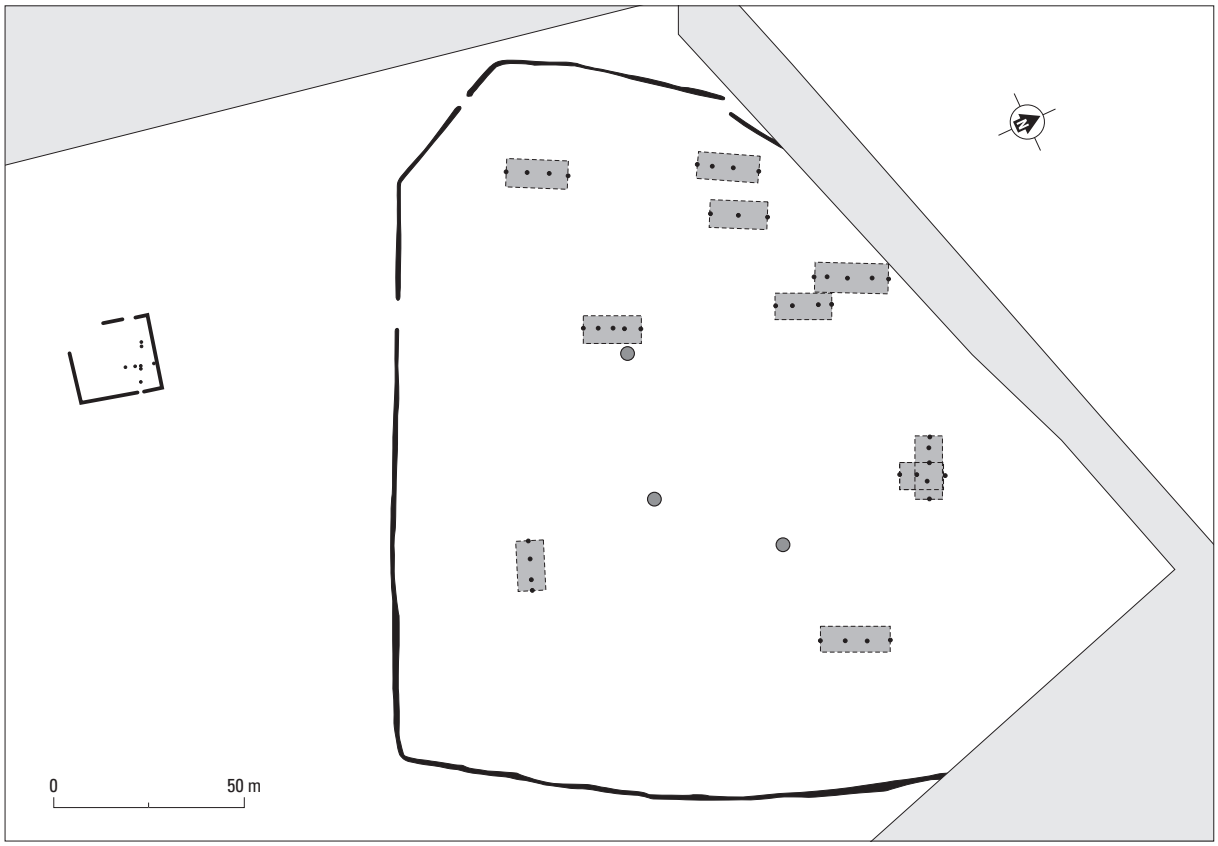

Fig. 4.24 Hoogeloon. Generalised overview of the 1st century AD enclosed settlement (predating the construction of a villa) and cult place. After Slofstra 1991b, fig. 12.

4.5.2 EARLY EXAMPLES OF SETTLEMENT NUCLEATION

Nucleation is a useful term to describe settlement patterns in a general sense – being both a process towards and a state of clustered habitation – but difficult to define precisely. What constitutes a nucleated settlement? Should we set an upper limit to the distance that farmsteads can be apart in order to be still considered nucleated?[250] Do two farmsteads constitute a nucleated settlement or should we think of a higher minimum number? On top of this there are common problems of dating and establishing contemporaneity. At the site of Roman-period Oss-Westerveld, for example, there was also occupation in the Late Iron Age, represented by at least nine farmhouses and a number of outbuildings and wells.[251] Based on the spatial distribution, it appears likely that there were two contemporaneous farmsteads before the enclosed settlement was founded, but the dating evidence for individual plans is too imprecise to be certain. This is a problem with many of the examples discussed below, but together they sketch a picture for the later part of the Iron Age of much more clustered occupation in comparison to the Urnfield period and an ongoing process of nucleation.

To the southeast and east of the urnfield of Someren the remains were found of about 15 houses of the Haps type that could be dated provisionally to the Middle Iron Age. In the Late Iron Age, the occupation

[250] Wesselingh (2000, 20), for example, considers a maximum hailing distance of about 150 metres as a critical border; Roberts 1996, 24.

[251] Schinkel 1998, 148-151, figure 141; Wesselingh 2000, 12-13, fig. 10, 158.

Fig. 4.25 Haps. Generalised overview of Middle and early Late Iron Age settlement remains. After Verwers 1972, appendix 1.

appears to have shifted slightly further to the north. Based on the two or three rows in which the houses line up, it is tempting to hypothesise that two or three contemporaneous farmsteads gradually shifted location along parallel paths. If this is true (but again, the dating evidence does not allow us to test this hypothesis), the distance between the farms was about 100 metres. This may or may not represent a nucleated settlement, depending on the definition used, but it is clearly a much more clustered pattern than occurred in the Early Iron Age (see fig. 3.17 for an example of a dispersed farmstead distribution at Early Iron Age Oss).

At Haps the occupation of the Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age consists of 20 houses of the Haps type on an area of about 100 by 60 square metres (fig. 4.25). Verwers, the excavator, assumed that the total length of occupation lasted from about 450 BC to AD 150, but others have later argued for a shorter duration between about 400 and 200 BC on the basis of a renewed analysis of the pottery from the farmhouses.[252] It is theoretically possible in this case to assume that the 20 farmhouses represent a single farm-

[252] Verwers 1972, 120-122. Van den Broeke (1985, 37) reanalysed the pottery as part of his research on Iron Age ceramics in the southern Netherlands. A continuation of the settlement into the Roman period is assumed by Verwers because of the presence of Roman pottery among the Iron Age finds in the disturbed plough zone above the settlement traces (1972, 113-114). There are no examples of house types of the 1st and 2nd century AD, however, and a more plausible explanation for these potsherds is that they represent manuring practices of a phase of arable cultivation at the site post-dating the settlement.

stead of which the byre-house was rebuilt 20 times, or once every 10 years. There are no other examples of so many and such short-lived building phases of a single farmstead, and it is more likely that two or three contemporaneous farmhouses were built and abandoned at a rate of about a human generation per farmhouse. This means that the Haps settlement formed a stable, nucleated settlement, albeit a very small one.[253]

Another example of clustered farmsteads with houses of the Haps type comes from the Almstein district in Oss.[254] The excavations here were on a fairly small scale, but it appears that within the excavated area of about half a hectare there were two farmsteads with at least three building phases each. This occupation has been dated to the earlier part of the Late Iron Age. To the south of the houses, a ditch running in an east-west direction could be followed for over 30 metres. Its dimensions varied but the ditch was about 1.5 metres wide and originally about a metre deep. There were no Late Iron Age settlement traces to the south of the ditch. Finds in the upper layers of the ditch demonstrated that by the second half of the Late Iron Age it had been largely filled up, which suggests that the ditch was contemporaneous with the houses. A shallower ditch running parallel to the southern one was found to the north of the group of houses, but it could be followed only for about ten metres, and it is unclear whether the settlement continued to the north of it.

The pattern of small groups of clustered farmsteads, which are stable or shift over small distances in the course of one or two centuries, continued during the Late Iron Age, even though during all this time single-phase, isolated farmsteads occured as well.[255] At the end of the Late Iron Age, probably in the 1st century BC, the trend towards nucleation intensified. The settlement of Weert-Laarderweg is a typical example of this (fig. 4.26).[256] In an excavated area of about 80 by 100 metres, a dense group of at least 40 plans of houses of the Alphen-Ekeren type was found. The eastern border of the occupation was probably determined by the remaining depression of the southwestern side of the 2nd century BC oval enclosure while the western border was formed by a shallower ditch, possibly of an even larger enclosure. The 40 or more house plans represent a period of occupation between ca. 50 BC and AD 250. It has proven difficult to date most of the house plans individually, but at least a number of them date to the 1st century BC or the earliest beginnings of the Roman period. Finds from the outer ditch and from outbuildings and wells also indicate that the occupation began in the Late Iron Age. During the 1st to 3rd centuries AD, this nucleated settlement consisted of about five contemporaneous farmsteads, but this number may well have been lower in the 1st century BC.[257]

In summary, there are no indications that there were nucleated settlements in the Iron Age of the size of Roman-period Oss-Westerveld or Hoogeloon. But it is clear that nucleation was not a new phenomenon in the Roman period, let alone something brought about by Roman occupation. At present, the evidence can be best understood as a gradual development of farmstead clustering, which began – at least in some areas – during the Middle Iron Age or the beginning of the Late Iron Age. Nucleated settlements of two to perhaps four farmsteads first appeared in the 1st century BC.

253 Verwers (1972, 120) assumes the presence of three to five contemporary houses, but this is based on estimates for the life span of a house of up to 80 years, much longer than the 20-30 years assumed above in chapter 3. Fig. 4.25 Haps. Generalised overview of Middle and early Late Iron Age settlement remains. After Verwers 1972, appendix 1.

254 Van der Beek 1996, 40-86; Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 76-79, fig. 72.

255 There are examples of clustered groups of two or three farmsteads from Weert-Raak and Oss.

256 Tol 1995; idem 1996a and 1998a.

257 Tol 1995, 17.

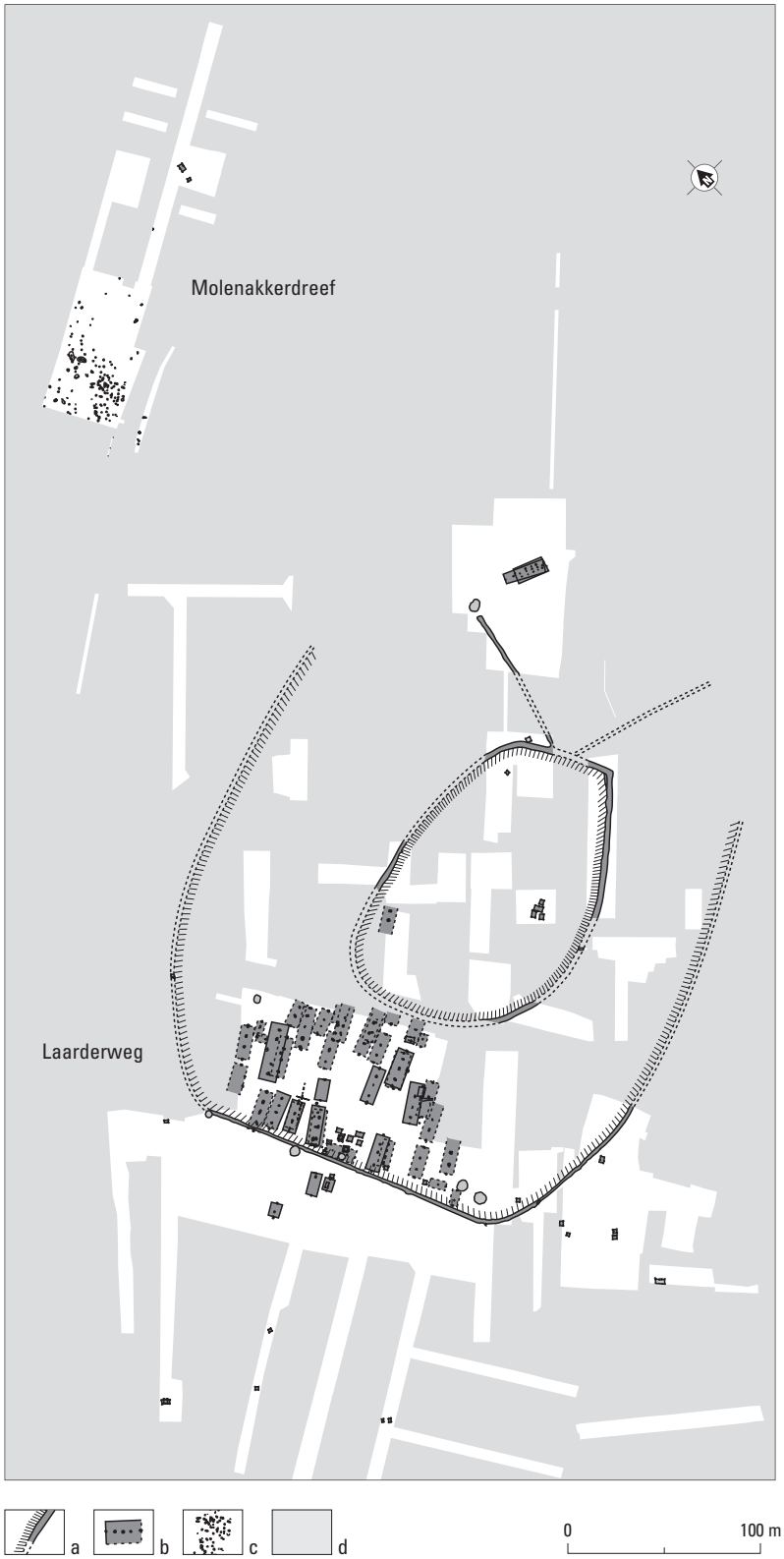

Fig. 4.26 Weert-Laarderweg. Late Iron Age and Early Roman period nucleated settlement, within (disused) enclosure, and Late Iron Age and Roman period cremation cemetery of Weert-Molenakkerdreef. After Tol 1996a, fig. 2.2. a) ditch (backfilled); b) farmhouse (with and without remains of wall construction); c) cemetery; d) not excavated.

4.5.3 SETTLEMENT ENCLOSURES

A development closely related to the nucleation of settlements is that of the appearance of enclosures and boundary systems associated with settlements. Even though the evidence for pre-Roman origins of settlement enclosures is scarce, there are indications that it may have been more common than appears at present.

A well-dated example of a settlement enclosure that predates the Roman period comes from the Schalkskamp district in Oss (figure 4.27).[258] Here, a terrain of at least 2.5 hectares was first enclosed by a ditch and bank system during phase K in the Oss chronology (150-75 BC). The enclosure and the interior space was only partially investigated, but the excavated part of the ditch system included several entrances, one of which consisted of a rather elaborate passage. The ditch itself, about 2 metres wide and 1 metre deep, had been cleaned out and was recut on several occasions. It contained large quantities of artefacts: pottery, loom weights, spindle whorls, glass bracelets, metal slag and in the northeast corner a deposit of 210 clay sling bullets. The slanted layers of sand in the fill of the ditch indicate that there may have been a low bank to the inside of the ditch. In the interior of the enclosed area the remains of several buildings were found. Some of these indicate that the area had already been inhabited prior to the construction of the enclosure. Habitation in the interior of the enclosure does not appear to have been very dense; possibly there was only one farmstead. An isolated Late Iron Age cremation burial surrounded by a ring ditch was located at a distance of about 40 metres from the farmhouse, possibly representing an example of the practice of burying the dead near the farmhouse (cf. 3.3.4). While it is reasonable to assume that the ditches represented a pre-Roman settlement enclosure, it is not certain that the habitation within the enclosure can be interpreted as nucleated and fixed.

This changed in the very first decades of our era, when a reorganisation of the terrain was undertaken (figure 4.28).[259] A new ditch system was dug, enclosing a larger area and apparently including fewer entrances. The excavators assume that the southwestern corner of the ditch was connected to the northeastern corner of the enclosure around the Oss-Westerveld settlement, 500 metres to the south.[260] In the partially investigated interior there were at least two contemporary farmsteads with long byre-houses, outbuildings and wells. One of the houses, a double house of 28 metres with four entrances (fig. 3.27c), was constructed with a timber post of a tree that had been felled in 17 AD.

Two other cases have already been discussed in the previous section: Oss-Almstein and Weert-Laarderweg. In the latter example, the relationship between the settlement and the double enclosure is interesting. There are few or no indications of habitation inside the enclosure at the time of its use, the 2nd and early 1st century BC. The distribution of the houses of the subsequent settlement phase was clearly determined by the ditches. But it appears that the ditched system itself had already lost its function by the time the first houses were built; the artefacts in the uppermost layers of the fill were associated with the earlier phases of occupation.[261]

4.5.4 THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND ITS SETTLEMENT IN THE LATE IRON AGE AND THE EARLY ROMAN PERIOD

During most of the Iron Age, farmsteads in the MDS region were dispersed over considerable areas. The archaeological term 'settlement' is confusing for these rather isolated farmsteads, and has therefore not been used for them in this chapter and earlier. As described in the preceding sections, increasing stability and nucleation are developments that took place late in the Iron Age, but the earliest examples do pre-

[258] Fokkens 1991b; idem 1992; Wesselingh 2000, 171-182.

[259] Wesselingh 2000, 181.

[260] Fokkens 1996, 202, fig. 4.

[261] Tol 1995, 9-11.

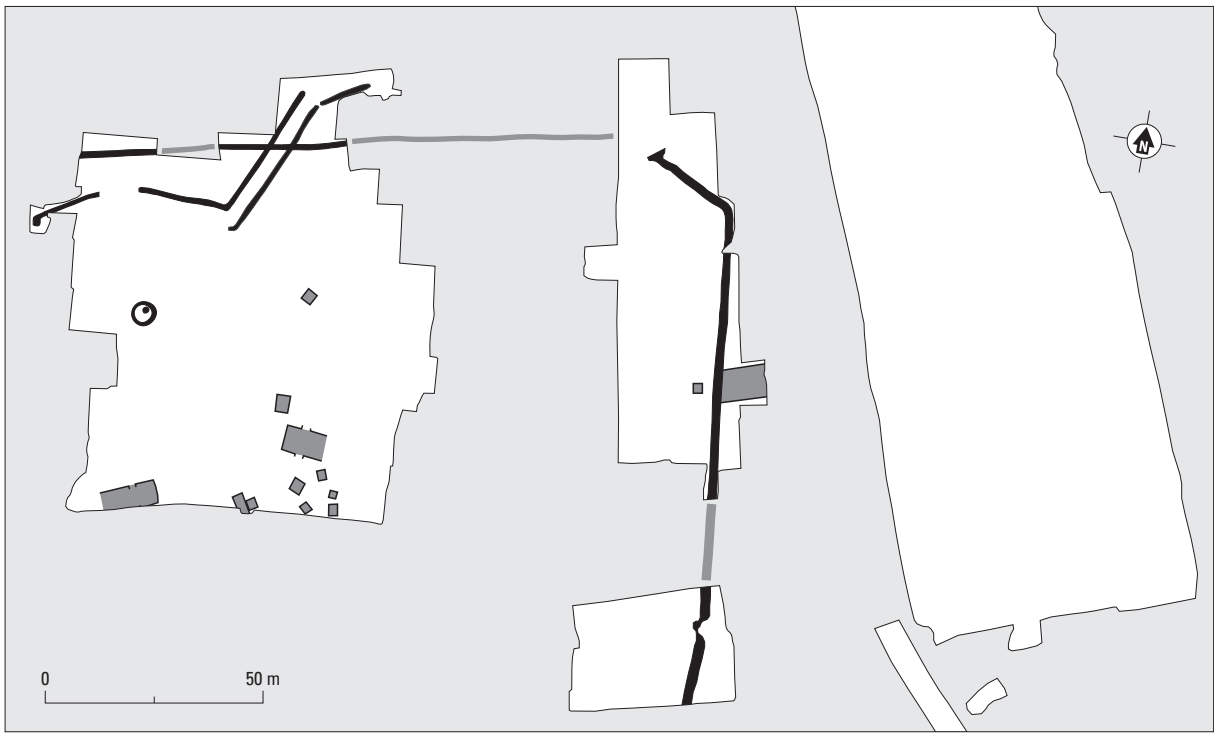

Fig. 4.27 Oss-Schalkskamp. Generalised plan of Late Iron Age settlement remains and grave monument, surrounded by ditched enclosure with entrances. After Fokkens 1992, fig. 25.

Fig. 4.28 Oss-Schalkskamp. Generalised plan of Early Roman period settlement remains surrounded by ditched enclosure. After Wesselingh 2000, fig. 193.

date the Roman period, and there is no reason to assume that this development was caused in some way by the Roman conquest. Nucleation was a gradual process, and did not occur everywhere to the same degree. The same can be said of settlement enclosures.

A possible explanation for practices of nucleation and enclosure is that they occurred as a response to social and political unrest, whereby people moved closer together and bound off their settlement for protection. The 1st century BC has been described as a period of increasing hierarchisation of society.[262] Moreover, Caesar's campaigns and his alleged decimation of the Eburones in the middle of the century no doubt seriously affected the population of the MDS region. These historical developments were followed in the later decades of the 1st century BC by the incursion of Germanic groups from the right bank of the Rhine. Some of these became a core element in the ethnogenesis of the Batavi.[263] It is reasonable, therefore, to think of the end of the Late Iron Age as a period of social unrest, possibly accompanied by increased raiding and warfare. The Late Iron Age river sanctuary at Kessel, with its finds of human skulls of individuals that had clearly died from violent blows by swords and other weapons, fits this picture as well.[264]

However, the archaeological data cannot be explained very well by this unrest hypothesis. Only a minority of the enclosures could possibly have functioned as defensive structures, the one at Weert, perhaps also the later phase of the Kontich enclosure, and the Late Iron Age enclosure at Voerendaal in the loess landscape of Dutch Limburg (see table 4.10). The ditches of these features were sizeable enough to suggest that they functioned as protection against cattle raids or tribal warfare.[265] But interestingly, all three enclosures were either not inhabited or only scarcely inhabited; only in a later phase were they selected as a site for a nucleated settlement. In the case of the true examples of settlement enclosures, the ditches would not have stopped any hostile intruders; at Schalkskamp these also would have been a choice of entrances. The proximity of farmsteads in itself may have provided a sense of security, even without the presence of an enclosure. But as was described above, the process of nucleation took place quite gradually over the course of several centuries. This also does not tally well with the idea of protection against social unrest.

If nucleation and settlement enclosures were not primarily intended for increased protection, the question is, of course, how they should be understood. To my mind, if we wish to find underlying causes for the process of nucleation, it is necessary to relate the habitation patterns of the Middle and Late Iron Age to changing agricultural regimes and regional settlement patterns. The evidence for these developments will be presented and discussed in the following chapters. In the synthesis I will return to the effects that these developments may have had on habitation patterns, but at this stage I am interested primarily in the symbolic potential of nucleated and enclosed settlements.

Even though the nucleated settlements of the Late Iron Age and the early Roman period were small and consisted of no more than a handful of houses, they form a considerable contrast to the dispersed farmsteads of the Urnfield period. The physical appearance of a clustered group of houses would have been quite different form a single one. Significantly, the settlements now included the whole or a major part of the local community, which thus, at least in a spatial sense, became well-defined by the boundaries of the settled area. A settlement enclosure would have contributed even more to the definition and distinction between settlement space and outside space, as well as between the inhabitants of the settlement and outsiders. In this sense, it appears likely that the nucleated settlement – especially in contrast to dispersed, unstable farmsteads – became a symbol of the local community.

[262] Roymans 1990, 18-45, 266-268. See also 6.6 for a fuller description of the socio-political developments during the Late La Tène period.

[263] Roymans 1998a; idem 2001.

[264] Ter Schegget 1999; see also 4.3.

[265] Tol 1995, 11-12.

There is a temporal element, moreover, that strengthens the symbolic links between community and settlement. The common house types in the nucleated settlements (excluding for the moment the early examples with houses of the Haps type) are variants of the Alphen-Ekeren type, which was built in a much more sturdy fashion than the earlier house types. As was argued in section 3.2, the Alphen-Ekeren houses were probably built for a considerably longer life span than earlier types. This means that houses could be passed on from one generation to the next; they could be inherited. Furthermore, houses in nucleated settlements were generally rebuilt adjacent to or even on top of the earlier house. The settlement as a whole (especially those examples that were founded in the Late Iron Age and were inhabited until the 3rd century AD) remained in the same place for two or three centuries. This means that houses and settlements became a much more fixed element of the landscape in relation to earlier periods. In the long run this would have affected not only the organisation of the settlement space, but also of the landscape around it and the distribution of activities within that landscape. In contrast to those of the Urnfield period, the inhabitants of nucleated settlements lived in a settlement which had been founded by previous generations or ancestors and could have been inhabited already for quite some time. This 'historical' dimension may well have contributed to the symbolic potential of the settlement in the creation of community.

4.6 LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND SETTLEMENT TERRITORIES IN TIME: DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS

In the introduction to this chapter it was argued that social identities and feelings of belonging to a locality are not only created through ritual, rites of passage, or socio-cosmological exchange relationships, but also through practices generally regarded as mundane: house construction, dwelling, cultivating the land and raising animals on it. In the sections of this chapter, attention has therefore been paid to settlement patterns and agricultural activities as well as to the ritual contexts of cemeteries and cult places. It is now time to bring these elements together, because it is from parallel or contrasting patterns among these categories that conclusions can be drawn. At this stage, the focus of the discussion is primarily on the changes that took place, and not so much on their possible causes. For each period, a short description will be given of the main elements present in a hypothetical settlement territory, followed by a discussion of the relationship between people and land and the symbolic construction of local communities.

4.6.1 THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

The main archaeological features of the Middle Bronze Age cultural landscape in the MDS region consist of barrows and barrow groups, the remains of dispersed and short-lived farmsteads, and depositions in wet contexts. We have very little direct evidence of the location of the fields, but they were presumably located near the houses, and would have shifted in conjunction with them.[266] There has been some

[266] Excavations in the riverine area north of the MDS region have yielded numerous traces of fences around Middle Bronze Age farmhouses, presumably parcelling the nearby fields (Theunissen 1999, 140, fig. 4.11, 147-148, 167-169, fig. 4.41). Middle Bronze Age barrows in the MDS region were almost always erected on top of the podzolised soil horizon, with the exception of five barrows at Toterfout-Halve Mijl, which were erected over old arable land (Theunissen 1999, 92).

discussion recently about the relationship between dynamic farmstead patterns and fixed barrows. Roymans and Fokkens presented a model in 1991 of a shifting pattern of occupation according to which barrows and fields followed the farmsteads.[267] A barrow was erected, in this model, for a family head in the vicinity of his or her house. This barrow was consequently used as a family burial place until occupation shifted to another part of the settlement territory or until it was deemed necessary to erect a new barrow.[268] A slightly developed version of the model was advanced by Roymans and Kortlang several years later.[269] They added the idea that in the Middle Bronze Age the territorial ordering of the landscape was loose and unstable in comparison to the Urnfield period. A certain amount of autonomy was awarded to individual households with regard to management of the land. Jan Kolen has recently proposed that the model of barrows being erected near farmsteads needs to be evaluated.[270] He points to a number of examples in different regions in the Netherlands where Middle Bronze Age farmsteads appear to have been located in the vicinity of older burial monuments, and suggests that the presence of older burial monuments was an element in the dynamics of farmstead mobility. The practice of enlarging and heightening old barrows and using them for secondary phases of burial may in some cases be related to the intermittent phases of occupation of the area around a fixed barrow.

If, in contrast to farmsteads or fields, barrows and barrow groups were fixed localities in the organisation of the landscape, places to which histories and myths were attached, it is likely that they played a role in the way in which communities identified themselves with the land and represented claims on the land. Both the models of Roymans and Kortlang and of Kolen assume that the territorial ordering of the landscape in the Middle Bronze Age was comparatively fluid and dynamic. As will be described in more detail in the following chapter, dispersed patterns of occupation were not only characteristic of settlement territories but also of larger regions, and it is likely that population densities were relatively low. This fits the notion of weakly developed territorial claims and a more or less loose and dynamic system of appropriation.

The second half of the Middle Bronze Age witnessed several changes in the burial practices that may indicate changing relationships to the land. The number of barrows erected per century appears to have increased, barrow groups became more common and secondary burials became more frequent.[271] It is hard to assess whether this was accompanied by a population increase or whether this was solely the result of an increase in the percentage of the population buried in barrows. A combination of both factors seems likely.[272] As a result of an increasingly filled-in landscape, cycles of habitation at specific localities followed each other with greater frequency, which would explain the increase in secondary burials. Moreover, it appears that new barrows were erected for a larger percentage of the population, indicating a transformation in the relationship between the living community and its ancestors. It is possible that this process of filling-in the landscape was accompanied by a process of solidifying the territorial organisation of the landscape, and that the increasing numbers of barrows were an element in this.

4.6.2 THE URNFIELD PERIOD

Ignoring for a moment the major transformations that took place within the six centuries of the Urnfield period, an average settlement territory of this period contained several new elements in comparison to

[267] Roymans/Fokkens 1991, fig. 7.

[268] The notion of family barrows is widespread in the literature on Bronze Age burial practices: e.g., Lohof 1994; Theunissen 1999.

[269] Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 50-53, fig. 10.

[270] Kolen in prep.

[271] Theunissen 1999, 85-86; cf. Lohof 1991, 224-229, for similar but better quantifiable patterns in the Northern Netherlands.

[272] Kolen in prep.; Roymans/Kortlang 1999.

the Middle Bronze Age. Most conspicuous are the urnfields, which were monumental cemeteries in which the great majority of the local community was buried over a long time period, and generally spatially bounded and separated from farmsteads and fields. From the beginning of the Early Iron Age onwards, there may have been enclosed cult places associated with urnfield cemeteries, but this was certainly not a general phenomenon. It is perhaps more appropriate for this phase to think of the cemetery as the cult place of a local community. Within each settlement territory there were three to six contemporary farmsteads, which were dispersed and short-lived, as in the previous period. They occurred, however, within a setting of celtic field complexes, which differed from the Middle Bronze Age. Even though the celtic fields developed in an organic manner through locally differentiated phases of cultivation and habitation, and even though at any particular point in time only small segments of a celtic field complex were under cultivation, it was argued in section 4.4 that the arable lands of a local community formed a fixed element in the settlement territory.

It has been proposed by several scholars that the urnfields of the Northwest European Plain were located, geographically as well as symbolically, at the heart of the settlement territories, and that they played a major role in the representation of territorial claims by a local community.[273] There are several aspects of urnfields that support this territorial marker hypothesis. In the first place, there is the fixed location of urnfields in the landscape. Throughout many generations, people continued to make the culturally determined choice of burying the dead in the same place as previous generations had done. The urnfield clearly transcended the generations and represented the historical and long-term habitation of a local community in the area. Secondly, and closely related to the fixed nature of urnfields, is their monumental character. This may have begun with an exceptionally large founder's burial monument, but it was essentially a kind of monumentality that depended on the vast spread of large and small, round and elongated barrows. There are no solid indications that the locations of urnfields were chosen for their visibility over a great distance (which in any case would have been difficult to achieve in the subtle geomorphology of the MDS region), but in open terrain an extended area with dense clusters of barrows would not be easily overlooked.

This specific form of monumentality also draws attention to the difference in the way Late Neolithic or Bronze Age barrows and urnfields functioned as both a symbol for the local community and a territorial marker. To function as a territorial marker it is not necessary for the urnfield to include all deceased members of the community; in theory, a single, permanent monument – be it barrow, megalith or henge – is all that is needed. It could be argued, therefore, that in the case of the urnfields the choice of burying most individuals in the cemetery reflects key values and ideas that were not directly related to issues of land rights or territoriality. It is quite possible that this development had its origins in changing ideas about the constituents of a person, of life and afterlife, or the socio-cosmic order. But in my opinion it can also be interpreted as a change in the way communities perceived and defined themselves through their relationships with ancestors and the land. While a territorial marker mainly communicates a message to the outside world, the specific communal nature of urnfields would also have been highly appropriate for expressing central values and ideas about the community to its members. We should recall that the appropriation of land is about social relationships in a specific historical and cultural context. In contrast to the Middle Bronze Age, it appears that membership of a local community was expressed in terms of direct lines of descent. It may have been perceived as a consequence of having one's ancestors in the urnfield, and of being entitled oneself to burial in the communal cemetery at death. Conversely, membership of the community would have given access to rights to the land of the settlement territory. In a very culturally specific manner, therefore, the urnfield was an element in the cultural construction of the local community, and through

[273] Roymans/Theuws 1999, 13-15; Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 39-42.

the recurrent burial practices and expansion of the urnfield with every funeral, the relationships between the community, its ancestors and its land were time and again recreated and reinforced.

In a different way, the celtic field complexes may also have been an element in the bond between community and land. In the course of many cycles of the agricultural regime associated with celtic fields, the system of low banks became more pronounced and visible. The way in which the landscape was thus shaped and ordered was clearly a gradual process, which took place over many generations and in which individual farmsteads and families periodically shifted location. The celtic field, in a sense, became a physical and permanent record of the history of a local community and its intimate interaction with the land. Even though positive evidence for this is hard to attain, it can be envisaged that the arable lands were thus a focus of communal identity, collective memory and feelings of belonging.

If both urnfields and arable lands were elements in the symbolic construction of local communities, they appear to have been so in a different way. Ethnographic studies demonstrate that in burial rituals, aspects of the socio-cosmic order tend to be brought out in a very explicit manner.[274] Relations between elements of the social as well as the wider cosmological order can be recreated through ritual exchanges between social groups, ancestors and deities. Burial rituals are part of longer cycles of rituals of birth, maturity and death. This makes funerary contexts and cemeteries a highly suitable context for expressing ideas and ideals about the social order of communities and their relationship with ancestors and land. Agricultural practices in non-modern societies can also be perceived in terms of ritual cycles between the living, the dead and the land, but this is set within a context of day-to-day, labour-intensive, mundane activities. For much of the agricultural year, ritual aspects tend to be in the background, to come to the fore especially at times of fertility or harvest rituals. It is therefore likely that feelings of belonging to the land, based on shared histories of working the land were of a different, more implicit nature than those based on burial rituals.

4.6.3 THE MIDDLE AND EARLY LATE IRON AGE

During the middle of the last millennium BC there was a period when the organisation of the landscape changed gradually but fundamentally. As described in section 4.2, over the course of perhaps a century all of the communal and often age-old urnfield cemeteries ceased to be used. Instead, people were buried in isolated graves and very small clusters of burials. It is unclear whether the total percentage of the population buried in this way decreased or whether the small number of graves that are known is the result of other factors. Certainly, the picture is affected by the poor archaeological visibility of Middle and Late Iron Age graves, which is caused not only by the dispersed locations of graves but also by the almost total lack of monumentality of individual burial monuments. It would appear that the potential of graves to be turned into permanent, visible and fixed places in the landscape completely disappeared. Another change that was noted in the burial practices is that the spatial segregation of the realms of the living and the dead became less marked in comparison to the Urnfield period. Burials in farmyards, at short distances from the dwelling places, occasionally occur.

In this same period a decrease in the wandering and fully dispersed nature of farmsteads can be discerned for the first time at several sites. This was a long drawn-out development, which did not reach a state of fixed and nucleated settlements until the end of the Late Iron Age or the early Roman period. But in my opinion it is not without importance with respect to the cultural construction of communities that its beginning falls in roughly the same period as the final 'abandonment' of the communal burial traditions. The setting of farmsteads within or near celtic field complexes probably changed in the

[274] Huntington/Metcalf 1982; Bloch/Parry 1982.

course of the second half of the last millennium BC, corresponding to the rise of a more fixed and intensive agricultural system.

Enclosed open-air sanctuaries became a more common element in the cultural landscape of settlement territories in this period. They tend to be associated with single burials or small grave clusters, suggesting that the cult practices associated with them had to do with death or ancestor cults. I have argued, however, that already during the Middle Iron Age there were examples that were not associated with the realm of the dead but with farmsteads and the living.

This description of the elements of a Middle or early Late Iron Age settlement territory illustrates that the most marked change took place in burial practices, but also that these cannot be understood if they are viewed separate from other, more gradual developments. For a discussion of the cultural construction of local communities, however, it makes sense to begin with a consideration of burial practices. Their transformation raises several important questions: if the urnfields were so important in the construction of communities in the Urnfield period, did they loose this function later on? And if so, what other means were chosen by people to define themselves as a group? Or, should we even envisage a complete crisis and breakdown of the social structure and the temporary disappearance of local communities and settlement territories?[275]

Giving up the practice of communal burial and of giving the dead a prominent place in the landscape can only be understood, in my opinion, as a fundamental change in the way in which local communities defined themselves and perceived their relationship with their ancestors and settlement territory. The key aspect of the Urnfield period burial ritual – the burial of everyone, or almost everyone, together in a monumental cemetery –was interpreted above in terms of the representation of communal identities, community membership and claims to land. This aspect disappeared completely. Theoretically, it is possible that even though the burial practices changed to a more dispersed pattern, the – now obsolete – urnfield remained the symbolic focus for the community and its claims to a territory. This seems highly unlikely: the defining characteristic of urnfields as community symbols was their continued, recurring, frequent use. An Urnfield period community defined itself through its burial rituals, rather than through its 'possession' of an urnfield in its territory. I am not claiming that the urnfields lost all symbolic meaning when they were given up, but that their status in the construction of living communities changed fundamentally.

Are we dealing, then, with communities that ceased to exist, or with communities that defined themselves by radically different means? This problem can only be addressed after an analysis of habitation patterns on a micro-regional and regional scale, which will be the topic of the following chapter. The settlement evidence that has been presented so far, however, already makes it clear that habitation did not come to an end on a regional scale, suggesting that local groups continued to be an element in the social order. Judging from the mortuary evidence, the role of ancestors for these communities appears to have changed. It is difficult to establish what the changes entailed, but if it was through lines of descent to communal ancestors in the urnfield that community membership was represented before, this then raises the question whether community membership was now defined in other terms. The archaeological record presents three categories that may have been involved.

Possibly, local communities came to define themselves as cult communities rather than burial communities. Cult practices and sanctuaries, either in funerary or settlement contexts, would then have taken on the symbolic meanings that the cemeteries had before. Against this hypothesis is the small number and restricted distribution of cult places dating to the Middle Iron Age or the beginning of the Late Iron Age. One would expect additional examples to have come to light at other sites where this period has been investigated.

[275] In this section, I will confine myself to a discussion of the changes that took place and postpone to the final chapter a discussion of the background and possible causes of the changes in burial practices.

A second option is that ancestors retained their role in the definition of communities, but that only a small selection of the population became the focus of ancestor worship after death. This would suggest a relationship between communities and ancestors reminiscent of the Middle Bronze Age. There is a category of rich graves dating to the beginning of this period, the 5th and early 4th century BC which comes to mind here. Some of them belong to the final phase of an urnfield, others occur as single graves or as one of a small cluster (see 4.2.2), and they contain grave goods such as wagon parts and weapons that suggest that the deceased may have held special positions in life. Could these persons have been turned into ancestors from which lines of descent were traced, which symbolised the community and formed a lasting element in the construction of a collective identity? I consider it possible that ancestor worship at this time became focused more on particular ancestors, rather than on the large body of communal ancestors (and this may be the background to the appearance of enclosed cult places associated with graves). But a major problem with this hypothesis is that there are absolutely no indications that these rich graves, or any other graves, were constructed as substantial burial monuments.

Thirdly, the possibility can be considered that farmsteads became a symbolic focus of social identity. In the previous chapter I argued that farmhouses and households were closely intertwined throughout the last millennium BC. In a pattern of wandering farmsteads, the potential of a house as an element in the cultural construction of social groups that transcend generations was limited: houses were regularly abandoned and not rebuilt at the same location. From the Middle Iron Age onwards, however, and especially in the Late Iron Age, when farmsteads became more fixed places in the landscape, it is possible that a farmstead became associated not only with a living household, but also with a family group spanning several generations. The practice of burying the dead near farmhouses can perhaps be understood in this respect as well; it would have added to the social and symbolic meaning of houses as permanent, perhaps even ancestral features. In this sense, fixed farmsteads may have taken on some of the roles in the construction of communities that the urnfields had before. To the outside world they would have conveyed a message of territorial control, while to the inhabitants they would have been localities at the heart of feelings of belonging, memory and the history and identity of the group.

An interesting question that has to remain open for the moment is whether the contrast between the communal nature of the cemeteries in the previous period and the still largely dispersed nature of farmsteads in this period is significant. Did a dispersed group of farmsteads have the same potential as an urnfield for symbolising the local community as a whole, or do they testify instead to an increased emphasis on family groups at the expense of the community? One argument in favour of this hypothesis could be the fact that burials often occur in small clusters in the Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age, possibly representing family burial grounds.[276] I will return to this issue in chapter 6.

4.6.4 THE LATE IRON AGE AND THE BEGINNING OF THE ROMAN PERIOD

There is not as clear a division at around 100 BC as there was at the end of the Urnfield period. But the gradual developments that took place in the second half of the last millennium BC did result in settlement territories that looked different at the end of the Late Iron Age from those of the Middle Iron Age. From the 2nd/1st century BC onwards communal cemeteries began to appear again, alongside a continuation of more dispersed graves. The Late Iron Age cemeteries differed significantly from the urnfields, however. Monumentality appears to have been of little importance; peripheral ditches or indications for the erection of mounds are rare, and large 'founder's graves' do not appear again until the Roman period. As was discussed in section 4.2.2 and 4.3.1, there are two exceptions to this, of large rectangular enclosures in cemeteries dating to the end of the Late Iron Age and the early Roman period, but it is unclear whether they should be interpreted as grave monuments or as enclosed sanctuaries.

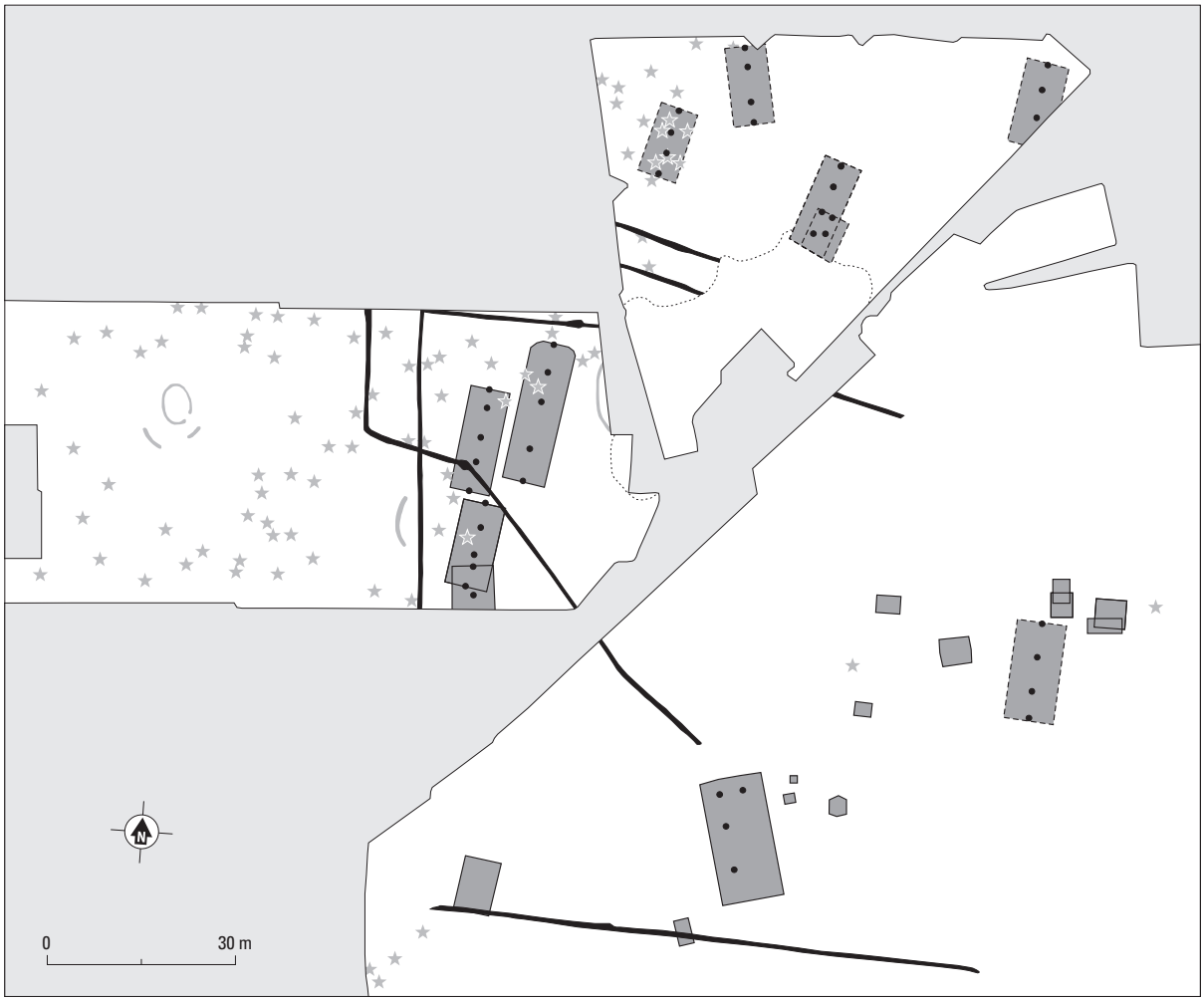

Fig. 4.29 Neerharen-Rekem. Generalised plan of Late Iron Age and Early Roman period settlement remains, adjacent to and overlying urnfield cemetery (light grey). After De Boe 1985, figs. 4 and 8.

The Late Iron Age is also the period when clusters of two or more farmsteads first appeared, representing the settlement of a local community or a part of it. With increasing nucleation, the period during which farmsteads remained in one location also became longer, spanning several building phases. Houses, of a type that first appeared in the last century BC, were constructed in a more sturdy and durable fashion. In all, the farmsteads and settlements take up a more permanent and more fixed place in the organisation of the landscape. The celtic fields appear to have been used only to a limited extent, and presumably the fields also became more fixed and durable in this period. This hypothesis is mainly based on settlement evidence (chapter 5) and has, with the possible exception of the Oss region, not yet been substantiated by evidence of a more permanent organisation of field systems.

Finally, enclosed cult places appear to have been an element in some of the settlement territories at the very end of the Late Iron Age and the 1st century AD. There are no examples at present that can be confidently dated to the earlier part of the Late Iron Age, but it is assumed that there was continuity from the Middle Iron Age onwards.

The continuously inhabited, nucleated settlement is the most likely candidate as an element in the self-definition of communities in this period. More so than in the previous period, nucleated and fixed settlements would have conveyed a message to the outside world of control over a local settlement ter-

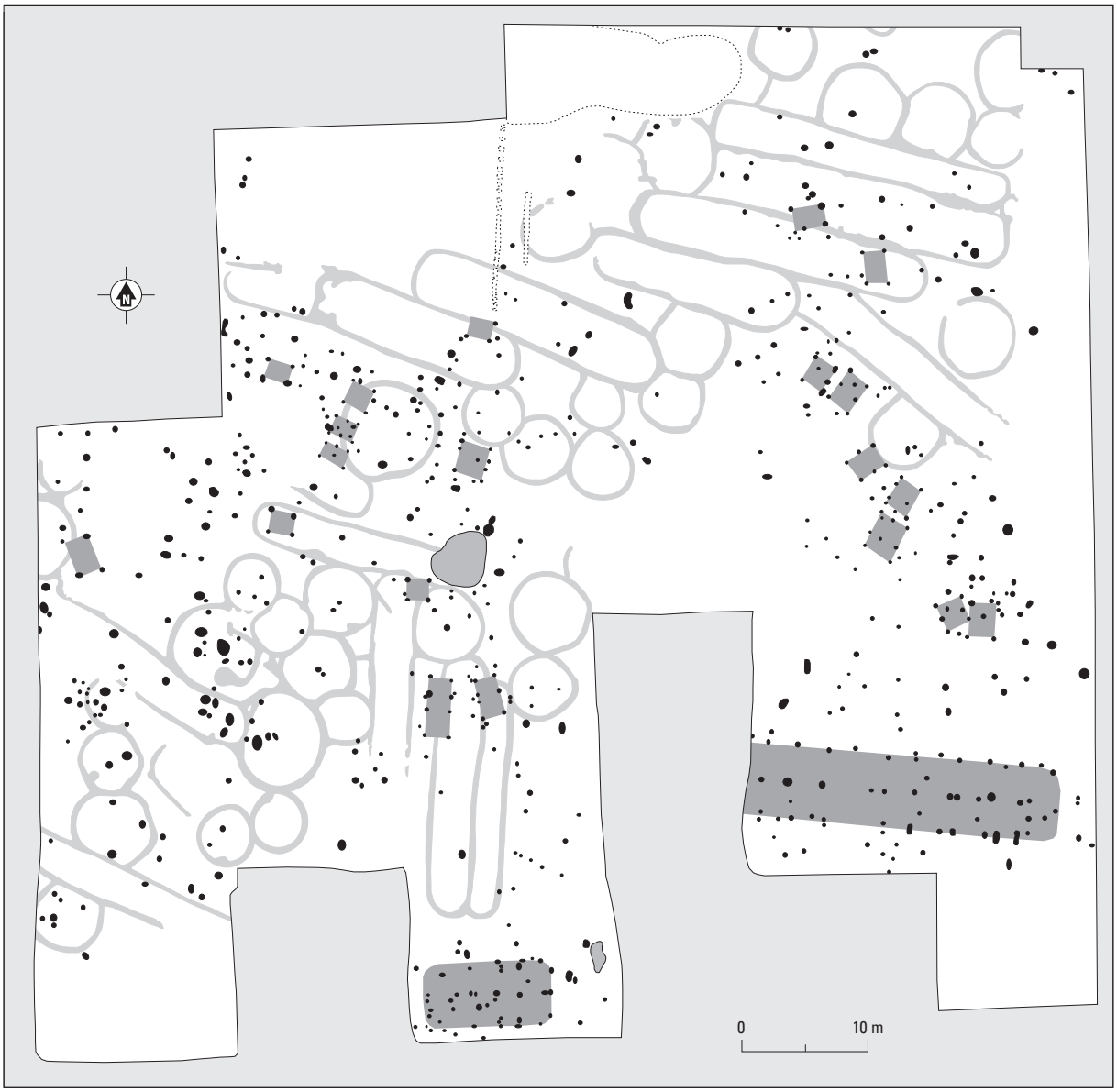

Fig. 4.30 Hilvarenbeek-Laag Spul. (Middle and) Late Iron Age settlement remains, adjacent to and overlying Late Bronze Age urnfield. After Verwers 1975, fig. 9 and appendix.

ritory. Equally, nucleated settlements could have had more of a trans-generational connotation than dispersed and unstable farmsteads, symbolising the historical presence of the local community in a particular territory. Given the collective but rather inconspicuous character of cemeteries at this time, it is likely that the relationship between the living community and its ancestors differed from that of the Urnfield period with respect to matters of kinship, property, land and inheritance. One could speculate that for matters of membership of a local community and rights to land within a settlement territory the ancestors played a less prominent or a less direct role than in the Urnfield period. Instead, these elements of people's identity may have been expressed in terms of being an inhabitant of one of the farmsteads that made up the nucleated settlement. Interestingly, it is also at the very end of the Late Iron Age and the beginning of the Roman period that enclosed rural sanctuaries became a rather prominent element within or near settlements. Wesselingh has recently suggested that the ditched enclosure R57 inside the nucleated and enclosed settlement of Oss-Westerveld represents a short-lived foundation 'monument' of

the settlement, with the act of construction perhaps having greater significance as a demarcation of a symbolic boundary than the maintenance of the 'monument'.[277] Such an idea of a settlement foundation, even when it does not represent the first occupation of the site, fits the notion of the settlement as a symbol for the social unity of the inhabitants.

Additional support for a symbolic focus on the settlement rather than on the ancestors can be found in the treatment of burial monuments and cemeteries of much older periods. In general, the examples of Roman-period cemeteries near or on urnfields, and the lack of evidence for a large-scale levelling of earlier burial monuments, suggests a positive valuation of these older monuments, and possibly even attempts to create an imaginary line of descent to much earlier inhabitants of the area.[278] But there is some variation in this pattern that may not be completely meaningless with regard to the cultural construction of communities.[279] There are a number of cases in the MDS region where an area that had been reserved for burials since the Bronze Age was turned into a settlement zone during the Late Iron Age. Sometimes actual burial monuments were levelled, but more frequently farmsteads were constructed directly adjacent to them. In Neerharen-Rekem, the eastern periphery of the urnfield of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age was built over by several farmsteads of an enclosed settlement of the last part of the Late Iron Age or the beginning of the Roman period (fig. 4.29).[280] As the urnfield consisted almost completely of flat graves, one could argue that during the intermediate centuries the status as a burial ground had been completely forgotten, but it is unlikely that this was not noticed during the construction activities of houses and ditches. At Weert-Kampershoek, what appears to have been the most monumental part of an urnfield was respected in the last part of the Late Iron Age, but a large zone with probably less conspicuous graves was reorganised as a settlement terrain with several contemporary farmsteads.[281] Something similar took place at the site of the urnfield of Hilvarenbeek (fig. 4.30).[282] In all, these and several other examples contribute to a picture of an organisation of the landscape in which the living community held a more prominent symbolic place than the dead and the ancestors.

4.6.5 CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter has been to evaluate the prevailing model of local communities within a territorially divided landscape. In particular, a need was perceived for a stronger emphasis on the social and cultural dimensions of these concepts and their inherent long-term dynamics. Recent debates in the social sciences on the nature of communities and the social and cultural practices that contribute to their construction and reproduction indicate that communities can be fruitfully viewed as symbolic entities based on collective identity, which exist through continuous processes of symbolic boundary marking. While the types of practices that can contribute to the construction of community are numerous, in non-modern societies the interaction with the land and the organisation of the landscape by a community are especially powerful sources of identity, feelings of belonging and a sense of community. The way in which a community defines itself through activities that transform the landscape can best be seen as one side of

276 See Theuws (1999) for a similar interpretation of a type of small grave clusters, sometimes located in farmyards in the Merovingian period.

277 Wesselingh 2000, 126-128.

278 Roymans 1995a.

279 See also Hiddink in prep.

280 De Boe 1985, fig. 4, 8.

281 Tol 1998b, 8, figure 2.1.

282 An additional example comes from Nijmegen-Hunerberg. This location, which had been used as a burial place from the Late Neolithic to the Early Iron Age, was drastically reorganised in the Late Iron Age. A ditch system was dug, probably surrounding a series of small fields, and at least three farmhouses were constructed at the site (Louwe Kooijmans 1973; Fontijn 1995, 73, fig. 8.8, 76-78.

a reciprocal process. The other side is formed by the way in which the inhabited landscape in turn gives form to and defines communities. Four categories of archaeological data were chosen for an investigation of local communities in the last millennium BC: cemeteries and graves, cult places and enclosures, arable lands, and settlements.

The sections of this chapter and especially the synthesis in this section demonstrate, in my opinion, that the concepts of local communities and settlement territories provide a number of promising avenues for studying the social and cultural dimensions of the relationship between prehistoric social, localised groups and their surroundings. I have emphasised those dimensions at the expense of dimensions of subsistence economy or political organisation, but would not want to argue that the latter are unimportant or that the concept of settlement territories cannot be used to study them. What my study shows, and what in my opinion has not been fully realised to date, is that the way in which local communities defined themselves was quite dynamic.

Several major transformations throughout the last millennium BC have been identified. In the Middle Bronze Age the territorial ordering of the landscape appears to have been relatively open and loose. Isolated barrows and barrow groups in which a small percentage of the population was interred provided means for an identification with ancestors and the land. In the Urnfield period, however, these relationships became much more fixed and formalised. It has been argued that local communities defined themselves essentially as burial communities, in which membership was based on the direct lines of descent one could trace to ancestors buried in the urnfield. To the outside world, the permanent and monumental urnfield formed a symbolic boundary representing the territorial claims of the local community to the land. Around the 5th century BC, burial practices changed, and it has been argued that this implied a drastic transformation of the definition of local communities. During the Middle Iron Age and the earlier part of the Late Iron Age, it is not quite clear what replaced the role of the urnfields as symbols of community, and it has been suggested that a combination of farmsteads, arable lands and cult places may have been involved. Possibly in this period the definition of local communities may have been looser and more flexible. At the end of the Late Iron Age and in the 1st century AD it appears that fixed settlements, sometimes nucleated and enclosed, had taken on the main role of community symbol.

5 Micro-regional and regional patterns of habitation, demography and land use

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Having discussed households and local communities in the previous chapters, in this chapter I will address settlement patterns and subsistence strategies in relation to changing environmental conditions. A related issue for attention concerns long-term demographic trends. My objective is to link the settlement territories that remained rather abstract in the previous chapter to their landscape context, the physical landscape, that is, of soils and topography, and of vegetation, agricultural potential and limitations.

Agricultural systems and environmental change are usually studied in specialised sub-disciplines of archaeology, using soils and botanical and faunal remains as their main sources of information. In contrast, I will address these issues primarily through a study of micro-regional and regional settlement patterns, partly because relevant ecological data are rather scarce for the MDS region, but also because the settlement record provides valuable evidence that has not been systematically integrated with ecological data. In this chapter, an integration of both categories of evidence will take place only to the extent that ecological data are available or can be extrapolated from neighbouring regions, but methodologically the main aim is to investigate the potential of settlement data for studies of subsistence and environmental change.[1]

There is one essential assumption to be made here. This is that there is a spatial relationship between farmsteads and settlements on the one hand and arable lands on the other, and therefore that the locations of farmsteads and settlements are representative of the locations of the fields. This appears a fair assumption for the later prehistoric societies of the Northwest European Plain, in which all or practically all households depended on a mixed subsistence strategy of crop cultivation and animal husbandry, and agricultural potential had a major impact on settlement patterns. The scale of analysis, however, is important. The immediate environment of a farmstead or settlement (if the environment could be reconstructed at such a fine resolution) is not necessarily indicative of the local environment in which the fields are located. But in a perspective that focuses on regional and micro-regional patterns and long-term developments, the coarser resolution means that farmsteads and fields can be combined more confidently.[2]

Two main questions can be asked to guide the initial analyses in this chapter. Firstly, how are settlement territories distributed over the landscape, and how and why do these distributions change over time? Secondly, what can be said about demographic developments? Both issues are addressed from a

[1] For a Danish example of a similar approach: Rindel 1999, esp. 93-96.

[2] Moreover, there is evidence from the central and northern Netherlands that farmsteads were situated within celtic field complexes (see 4.2.2).

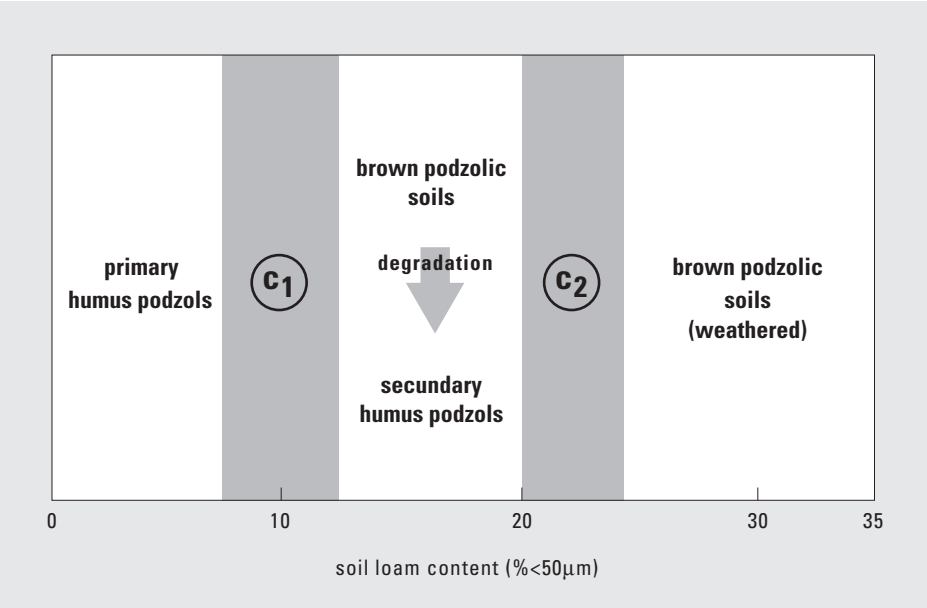

Fig. 5.1 Diagram indicating the relationship between loam content of the soil and primary and secondary podsolisation. After Spek 1993, fig. 1.

long-term perspective, which places greater emphasis on the first millennium BC, but which also incorporates the Middle Bronze Age background as well as developments at the beginning of the Roman period. Two sections, which address problems of micro-regional habitation patterns and demographic trends, are followed by a section that discusses the observed patterns in terms of a model of environmental change, and that presents some thoughts on corresponding changes in the agricultural system.

5.1.2 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

There are several methodological issues that should be addressed before a consideration of regional habitation patterns can be begun. These issues derive from the specific geomorphological and historical developments of the landscape and its differentiated effects on post-depositional transformations of the archaeological record. In the order in which they will be discussed here, they include soil formation processes during and after the first millennium BC, the development of *essen after* the Late Middle Ages, the effects of differential research intensities in different parts of the MDS region on regional distribution maps, and the variation in the visibility of different types of archaeological phenomena.

Geologically, the MDS region consists largely of coversands that were deposited during the Pleistocene. It is essentially a flat landscape with minimal differentiation in elevation and topography, a landscape of sandy plateaus intersected by numerous small streams. Typically, the difference in elevation between the top of a coversand plateau and the stream valley bottom is no more than a few metres. It can be assumed that the locations of the stream valleys were roughly the same in prehistory as they are on early modern topographical maps, with only minor differences. Stream valleys and peat marshes are ill-suited for habitation and cultivation, and would certainly not have been more attractive in prehistory. These wet zones of the landscape will therefore largely remain outside the scope of analysis in this chapter, even though the absence of habitation does not mean that these areas were economically or culturally insignificant.

An important factor in soil formation processes in coversand soils is the precipitation surplus. Throughout the Holocene, the amount of water flowing downwards through the soil stratigraphy has exceeded evaporation rates. This is a situation in which podzolisation can take place, the process whereby humus elements and iron oxides are leached out of the topsoil (the A-horizon) and are deposited at a lower level (the B-horizon). In terms of the potential for arable cultivation, podzolisation means a degradation of the soil quality. Several factors affect podzolisation processes in sandy soils, foremost being the percentage of loam particles among the sand, and to a lesser extent the vegetation cover and human interference with the vegetation.[3] Soils with a loam content of below 10% tend to form podzols no matter what the vegetation cover (fig. 5.1). The resulting soil is termed 'primary podzol'. Soils in which the loam content is between 10% and ca. 20% may or may not podzolise, depending on the hydrological conditions, the vegetational cover and the type of humus input. Human activities such as forest removal, crop cultivation or sod cutting result in changes in the type and amount of humus entering the system and the amount of moisture flowing through the soil. In the long run this leads to accelerated podzolisation. Such podzols are termed 'secondary podzols'. Finally, when the loam content of the soil is above 20-25 % percent podzols are unlikely to develop. In the province of Drenthe, for which Spek has investigated these issues, the majority of the soils on the coversand plateaus fall into the 10-20% loam category.[4] The situation is comparable for the MDS region, with its similar Pleistocene coversands as parent material.[5] Higher loam levels not only mean a greater resilience of the soil against podzolisation, but under dry conditions also correspond to a higher fertility.[6]

On modern-day soil maps, sandy soils are classified on the basis of, among other things, the formation of a podzol. Some of the most common soil types on the coversands of the MDS region are humus podzols belonging to the hydropodzol and xeropodzol soil groups.[7] These are primary and secondary podzols, and represent degraded, podzolised variants of brown podzolic soils.[8] In other words, the soil map is based on a criterion that is subject to diachronic development. It cannot be assumed that soil formation processes had reached the same stage in the Iron Age as they have now, or even that the situation was stable throughout the last millennium BC. On the contrary, it should be assumed – until proven otherwise – that the modern-day soil map, with extensive areas of hydropodzol and xeropodzol soils, does not represent the situation of the first millennium BC. A key question concerns the time frame of the podzolisation of primary and secondary podzols. Unless developed soils are buried under deposits that are datable through archaeological or geo-physical methods, this is often difficult to establish.

A first methodological problem is thus caused by the fact that modern-day soil maps do not represent the prehistoric situation, and are therefore not very informative of the land use potential in the Iron Age. Palaeo-geographical maps are unavailable at present, and producing a series of them for the first millennium BC is not feasible in the context of this study, not even for selected micro-regions.

A second area of methodological concern is caused by the presence of the *essen*, the elevated arable soils which form a cover of up to 120 centimetres.[9] Their genesis from the Later Middle Ages onwards

3 Spek 1993, 174-177.

4 Spek 1993, 180-181.

5 This is based, however, on a cursory investigation of the soil map.

6 Spek 1993, 178.

7 Particularly common on the Pleistocene coversands are the subgroups of the *veldpodzol* soils and *haarpodzol* soils, which have formed under wet and dry conditions respectively.

8 In Dutch: *moderpodzol* soils or *bruine bosgronden*; German: *Podzol-Braunerde*, or *Parabraunerde*. In the Dutch classification system, these soils are included in the order of the podzols (De Bakker/Schelling 1989), even though podzolisation has not been a major factor in their formation (Spek 1993, 177; idem 1996).

9 Cf. 2.2. Several terms that do not translate very well into English are used here to denote complexes of fields that have generally been in use since the Late Middle Ages or earlier: *es* (plural *essen*) are arable lands which are characterised by anthropogenic *plaggen* soils, consisting of soil which has been brought onto the fields in the form of sods (*plaggen*) mixed with manure. The term 'old arable land' is used as an approximate translation of *es*, irrespective of the presence and thickness of the *plaggen* soil.

has been described in general terms in chapter 2 and will not be repeated here. Obviously, and adding to the problem of representativeness, they form a feature on the soil maps that was not present in prehistory. Moreover, the *essen* effectively seal off archaeological deposits from regular ploughing activities, preserving the remains but also rendering them practically invisible to investigations that depend on non-destructive methods. Common survey methods such as field walking, suitable in heathlands, fall short when used for the *essen* zones. The visibility of archaeological remains, i.e. their chance of discovery without large-scale excavations, differs greatly between the zones that have an anthropogenic *plaggen* cover and those that do not. This results in a serious distortion of habitation pattern maps that has to be taken into account.

A fairly simple but satisfactory solution to these two methodological problems is to use 19th-century topographical maps instead of soil maps as the starting point of the analysis.[10] The earliest of these show the landscape largely as it was before the introduction of artificial fertiliser and before large-scale reforestation programmes had been carried out. Slightly later ones have the advantage of being cartographically more reliable.[11] These maps depict a landscape of which the areas outside the stream valleys and their meadows was essentially divided into two main zones, the old arable complexes (often with *essen* covers) on the one hand and the uncultivated wastelands, with an open heather vegetation and numerous large and small peat marshes, on the other. Figure 2.2 shows a section of a topographical map of c. 1850, around the village of Someren. This bipartite division of the pre-modern landscape dates back to at least the Middle Ages, but it will be argued here that its basic structuring elements have their origins in developments that took place in late prehistory. The *essen* are situated around villages and hamlets that were usually founded in the Early and High Middle Ages. In their main outlines the 19th-century maps represent the landscape as it had formed since the Late Middle Ages. This is not to say that the situation remained static during the intermediate centuries, but wasteland reclamations or other changes in the physical organisation of the landscape were relatively minor. The wastelands, for example, went through a cycle of increasing openness and heathland expansion during the 17th and 18th centuries AD when sheep herding and sod-cutting became more important, followed by a phase of reforestation in the 19th and early 20th century.[12] But throughout the centuries its predominantly non-arable exploitation remained the same, even though small parts of it may have been used at times for extensive cultivation.

There are two important reasons for using this bipartite division of the coversand plateaus as the framework for regional and micro-regional analyses. The first is that the locations of the old arable zones correlate positively with those soils that have a high loam content and are the least prone to podzolisation and soil degradation.[13] This means that the locations of the medieval arable lands roughly indicate the locations of the relatively more resilient and fertile parts of the prehistoric landscape. It is far from a perfect match, but presents a less biased picture than the modern-day soil maps do, because in contrast to the degree of podzolisation and hydrological conditions, loam contents and relative elevation are not likely to have changed dramatically since prehistory. A second advantage of using the 19th-century maps

[10] This retrospective historical method has been developed largely by Nico Roymans. Cf. Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

[11] Two sets of maps are available for the Dutch part of the MDS region: the *Topografische en Militaire Kaart van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (recorded in 1838-1857), republished in the *Grote Historische Atlas van Nederland, 1:50.000, deel 4, Zuid-Nederland, 1838-1857*, Groningen (1990), and the *Chromotopografische Kaart des Rijks* (the 'Bonne-atlas', recorded between 1866 and 1898), republished in the *Historische Atlas van Noord-Brabant. Chromotopografische Kaart des Rijks 1:25.000*, Den Ilp (1989), and the *Historische Atlas van Limburg. Chromotopografische Kaart des Rijks 1:25.000*, Den Ilp (1989).

[12] Leenders 1996b; Behre 2000, 149.

[13] Spek 1993, 203-206, fig. 10b.

relates to the post-depositional transformation processes alluded to above. By distinguishing in the analysis between the old arable zones and the wastelands, it is possible to take into account the differential visibility of archaeological phenomena in those two zones. Moreover, there is the fact that the two zones have a different history of archaeological research (described in chapter 2). The wastelands are the areas where archaeological research in the MDS region began and developed until the 1960s. In this period most attention was paid to easily recognisable archaeological features, particularly the Bronze Age and Iron Age cemeteries. *Essen* archaeology developed later, and the emphasis shifted to settlement archaeology and more recently to landscape archaeology. The biases resulting from these differential research histories can be recognised more easily by retaining the distinction between the old arable zones and wastelands in the analysis.

A third methodological issue concerns the variability in the amount of archaeological research that has been carried out in different areas of the MDS region. In general, the research intensity in the Dutch part has been greater than in the Belgian part, but within both countries there are relatively well-researched regions and areas where archaeological research has barely begun, such as for example the western part of Noord-Brabant.[14] Regional distribution maps are of course negatively affected by this differentiation, even to the point of rendering them ineffective for studying long-term settlement patterns. A more rewarding approach is therefore to start from a micro-regional perspective. There are several areas in the MDS region where there has been sustained archaeological research, through excavations and often through long-term and intensive surveys by local archaeologists. These serve as 'core' areas, whose specific habitation histories can be studied in some detail. By looking at the similarities and contrasts in the habitation histories, regional patterns can then be sketched in a model-like fashion.

Micro-regional habitation is not attested to by farmsteads and settlements alone, but also by evidence of burial places and field systems.[15] By taking those categories of data into account, we greatly increase our ability to reconstruct habitation patterns – hence the term habitation patterns instead of the more common settlement patterns. But combining different categories of data is not completely straightforward. It is clear that the visibility of different archaeological phenomena varies and that this affects the representativeness of distribution maps. Some of the factors that influence the archaeological visibility are the landscape context (open heathland, modern and submodern reclamation, forest or *essen* cover), the nature of the phenomenon itself (its size, isolated or clustered occurrence, the presence of whole or eye-catching artefacts, being preserved above ground etc.), and also of course matters such as the period of discovery, the archaeologically trained eye of the discoverer, and the existence of networks of local and professional archaeologists. Table 5.1 shows in a qualitative fashion the chance of discovery based on the first two factors - landscape and nature of the phenomenon. It is based on pre-existing knowledge, but it compares the theoretical chance of discovery and not the actual situation reflecting the presence or absence of habitation in a particular region.

The table reveals several patterns. First, in the arable zones archaeological remains can really only be investigated through excavation. All prehistoric and Roman-period features that were still standing above ground were levelled in the Middle Ages and their remains have since been covered by *plaggen* soils. The chances of accidental discovery of urnfields or native-Roman cemeteries, let alone settlements or isolated farmsteads, are low. Second, the features with the highest archaeological visibility are Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age urnfields and Roman-period cemeteries. In heathlands and former heathlands they are likely to be discovered because of the presence of mounds and concentrations of whole ceramic ves-

[14] This situation is beginning to change with large-scale excavations in the vicinity of Breda, but little of this new body of data has been published yet (but Van den Eynde/Berkvens 2001).

[15] See section 4.4 for evidence suggesting that farmsteads, fields and burial places were generally not far removed from each other. The category of deposits in wet contexts is less suitable in this respect.

archaeological feature	situation	EBA/MBA	LBA/EIA	MIA/LIA	late LIA/RP
farmstead or settlement	heathland (survey or excavation)	_	_	_	+
	old arable (survey)	_	_	_	_
	old arable (excavation)	+	+	++	++
barrow or cemetery	heathland (survey or excavation)	++	+++	_	++
	old arable (survey)	_	_	_	_
	old arable (excavation)	+	++	_	+++

Table 5.1 Comparative table indicating the archaeological visibility of archaeological phenomena. Legend: – : chances of discovery are low; +, ++, +++: medium, high and maximum archaeological visibility (maximum: if present, it is very likely to be found).

sels, under the *essen* because of their clustered nature, the presence of pits and ditches, and also the presence of whole artefacts. Individual Bronze Age barrows, often substantial in size but mostly lacking grave goods, have a greater chance of having been destroyed without documentation,[16] especially during the early phases of reclamation and reforestation campaigns in the 19th century. But their chance of discovery is still relatively high. Graves of the Middle and Late Iron Age have much lower chances of discovery: they often occur in isolation, and usually lack mounding and complete pottery. Even in *essen* excavations they can be easily overlooked or wrongly dated. Third, remains of farmsteads and settlements have a lower chance of discovery than cemeteries because all structural features have disappeared. Moreover, due to depositional practices as well as post-depositional transformations, artefacts tend to occur in relatively low densities. The degree of nucleation and stability of farmsteads makes a difference here. Nucleated and fixed settlements of the Roman period, which are likely to consist of dense concentrations of post-holes, pits and artefacts, have of course a much higher chance of discovery than an isolated, single-phase farmstead of the Urnfield period. Finally, the table shows that a micro-regional analysis of long-term habitation patterns is likely to produce a biased picture because of the differences per period. The situation is good for the Urnfield period and Roman period, less so for the Middle Bronze Age, and poor for the Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age. This phase can only be investigated through excavation, but we should realise that even in the largest excavation project the excavated area is always a small fraction of the total arable zone.

5.2 THE HABITATION HISTORIES OF FOUR MICRO-REGIONS

Figure 5.2 shows the location of four sections of the MDS area which have been selected for an analysis of long-term habitation patterns on a micro-regional scale.[17] The term micro-region is not meant to describe a unit of cultural, territorial or geographical significance, but solely to denote a relatively small segment defined for analytical purposes. These four areas have been chosen primarily because of the quality of the available data set, as they are all regions where sustained archaeological research has been conducted. There are two larger areas: the western part of the Kempen region around the modern-day villages of Bladel and Hoogeloon (204 square kilometres), and the Weert-Nederweert region (238 square kilometres), and two smaller areas: the Someren region (72 square kilometres), and the Oss region (81 square kilometres). The last region has been a major focus of attention for the University of Leiden over

[16] Fokkens 1997a, 304.

[17] For the fifth area indicated, the Bergeyk-Riethoven region, see 5.3.2.

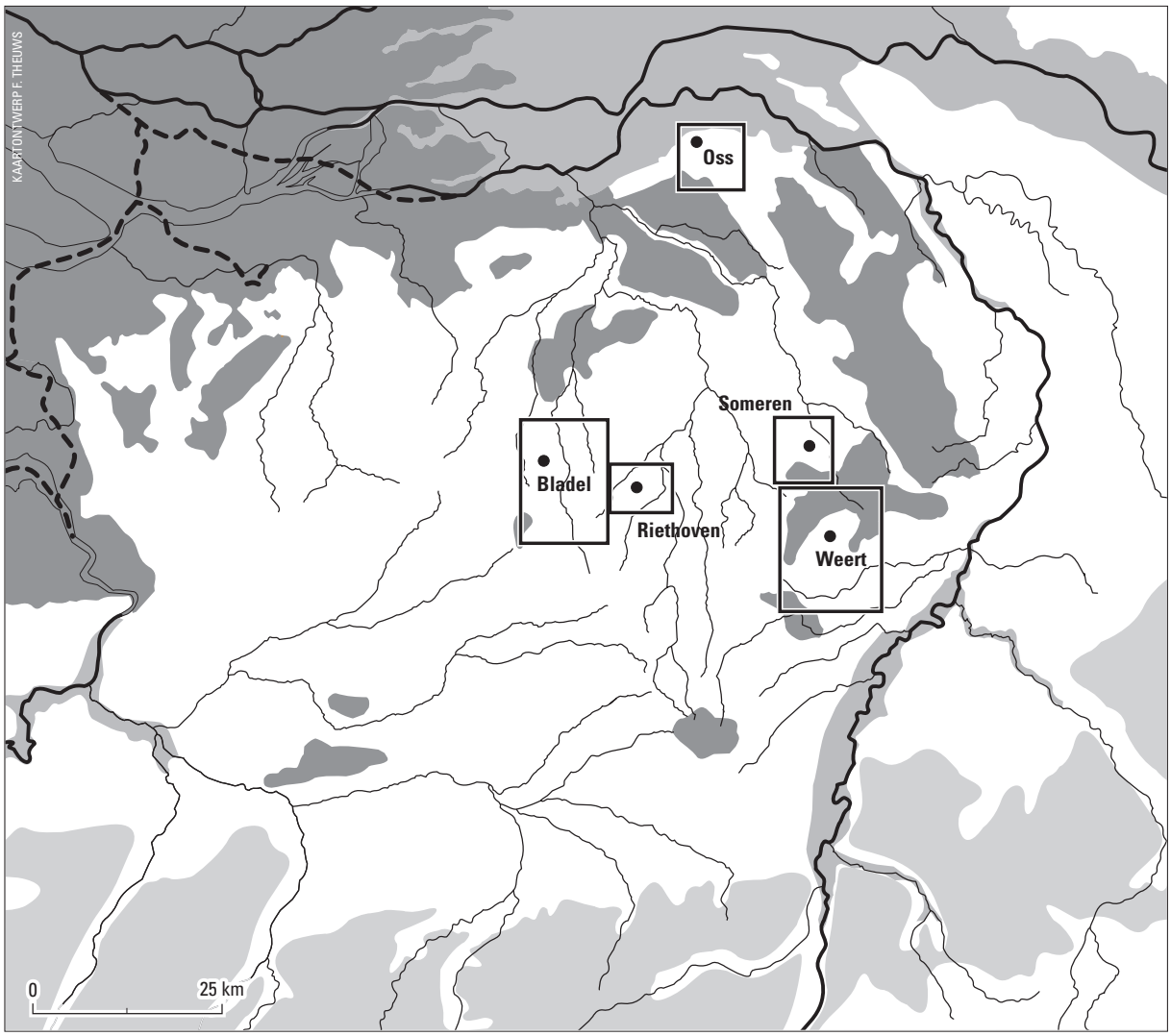

Fig. 5.2 Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region. Micro-regions selected for analysis.

the last 25 years and continues to be so. Research in the Someren and Weert regions by the University of Amsterdam and the Free University at Amsterdam, including large-scale excavations, began in the early 1990s and still continues. The Kempen region was studied intensively by the Free University in the 1980s. From a landscape perspective, the four selected areas represent the main variations of the MDS region coversand landscape, including a micro-region that borders on the Meuse valley (Oss), and one in the sandy heartland (the Kempen).

In order to avoid the most distorting effects of the biases discussed above, I will focus on a comparison between the Urnfield period (represented on the maps by the urnfields) and the end of the Late Iron Age and the Roman period (represented by settlements and cemeteries). The main questions concern the landscape contexts of settlement territories and the density of occupation. In order to set the scene, Middle Bronze Age patterns will be briefly discussed, but (apart from the Bladel-Hoogeloon area) these are not incorporated in the maps. Middle and Late Iron Age habitation patterns are hard to depict in map form, and a full discussion is postponed until the next section.

The micro-region around Bladel and Hoogeloon has been defined as an area of 12 by 17 kilometres which rises gently from about 21 metres above sea level in the north to 41 metres in the south (figs. 5.3, 5.4). Geologically speaking, the area consists of coversands of Weichselian date, mostly less than two metres thick, overlying fluvial deposits of coarser sands and gravels of the Sterksel Formation. The south-western corner of this region belongs to the Belgian part of the MDS region and will not be included in the analysis. One urnfield is known from it, but part of this area was already reforested before 1840, before early archaeological interest in the prehistoric remains arose.[18] The 19th-century map shows a division of the Bladel-Hoogeloon area into two areas. The southern part consists almost exclusively of wastelands (this includes the Belgian part), and only few cultivated zones. This is a highly marginal area with light and easily degradable soils. The northern half of the region consists of old arable zones around the medieval hamlets and villages, interspersed by stream valleys used for pasture, as well as heathlands and marshy depressions. In comparison to the Weert and Oss regions described below, the landscape is quite finely differentiated, with relatively small landscape zones.

The Kempen, of which the Bladel-Hoogeloon region is part, attracted archaeologists early on because of the concentrations of prehistoric barrows and barrow cemeteries that could still be seen above ground. Many barrows and urnfields were encountered in the heathlands during the ploughing activities which preceded reforestation or reclamation for cultivation. Their documentation has largely been due to the work of local archaeologists, as professional archaeology did not pay serious attention to the Kempen until the 1950s. Even since then there have been few excavations of prehistoric features that were more substantial than individual barrow investigations.[19] The Roman period has been investigated more systematically in the Bladel-Hoogeloon region, with excavations by the Free University of a Roman-period cemetery at Bladel-Kriekeschoor, and especially the native-Roman enclosed settlement with a villa in the old arable zone of Hoogeloon.[20] To date, the truly large-scale *essen* archaeology of the last fifteen years has not taken place here, due to the less grandiose expansion plans of the local municipalities than those in the Oss, Someren, and Weert regions. In spite of the lack of excavations, however, there is a good deal known of the archaeological remains under the *essen* covers because of sustained activities by local archaeologists who made observations over the last decades at construction and sand quarrying sites (the sand being removed from under the organic-rich topsoil for commercial purposes).

Middle Bronze Age habitation in the area is attested by the presence of barrows and barrow groups, mostly found within the heathlands (fig. 5.3, table 5.2).[21] In comparison to the later Urnfield period, habitation appears to have been significantly less dense, but it is hard to be specific about Middle Bronze Age population densities. No fewer than 26 urnfields are known from urns or find reports (fig. 5.4, table 5.3).[22] The large majority is situated in the pre-modern heathlands, but there are undoubtedly others still hidden under the *essen*. The distribution of urnfields appears to be roughly of equal density in the northern and the southern part of the region. There is only limited information on the dates of use of the urnfields, few of them having been systematically excavated. Three have yielded evidence of graves from both

[18] The coarse gravels of the Sterksel Formation lie close to the surface here, making the soils unattractive for arable farming. It is likely that this area was always very sparsely inhabited.

[19] E.g. Beex 1954; idem 1955. An exception in the Kempen, but outside the micro-region, is the large cluster of Bronze Age tumuli at Toterfout-Halve Mijl which was excavated by Glasbergen (1954).

[20] Roymans 1982; Slofstra 1987; idem 1991b.

[21] This map is partly based on information generously provided by E.M. Theunissen.

[22] Several probable urnfields have been included on map 5.4 that are not listed in the urnfield catalogue in appendix 2.

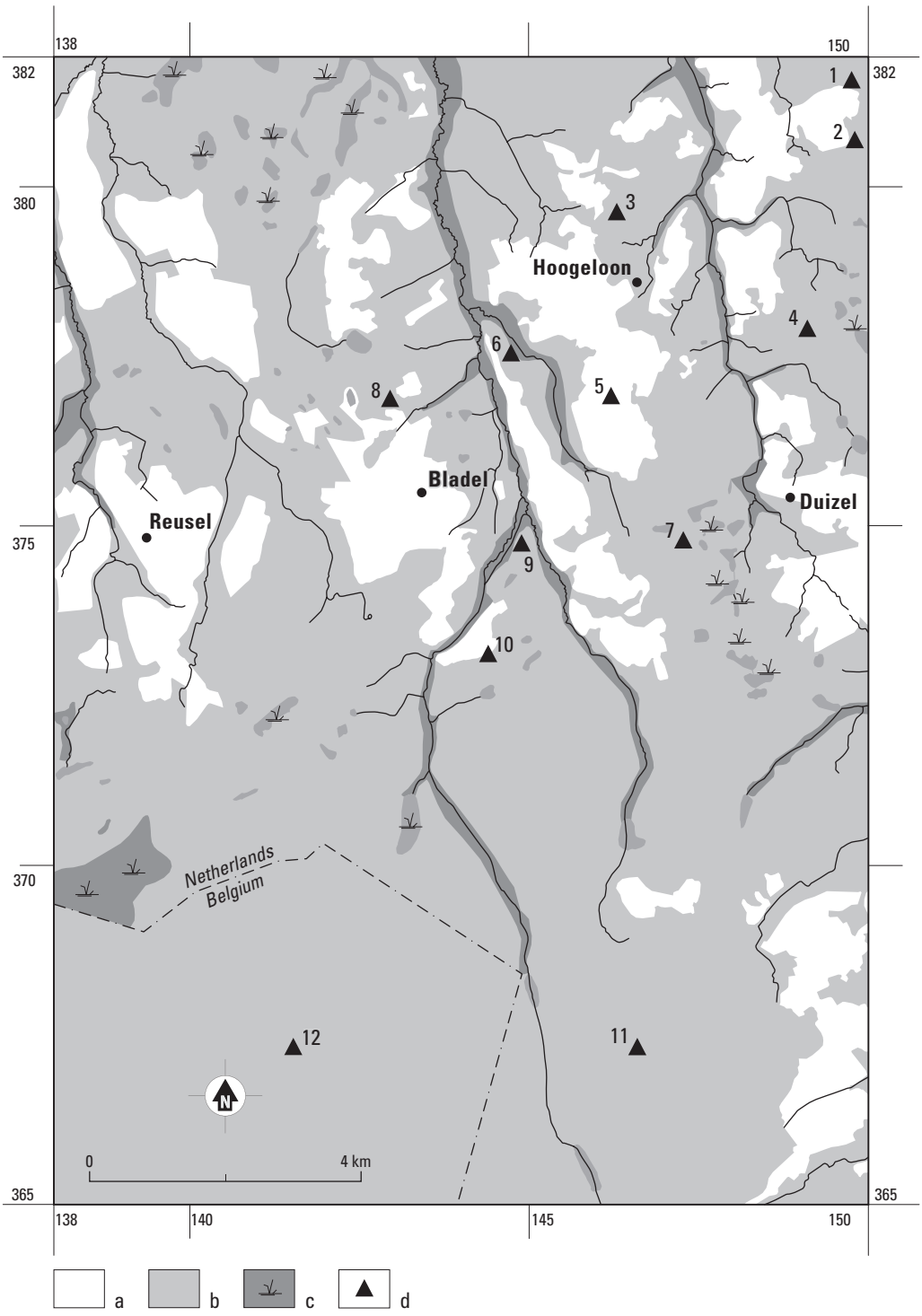

Fig. 5.3 Bladel-Hoogeloon micro-region, based on the 19th-century situation. Distribution of Late Neolithic, Early and Middle Bronze Age tumuli and barrow groups. The numbers correspond to table 5.2. a) old arable land; b) uncultivated (predominantly heathland); c) fen/peat moor; d) barrow or barrow group.

no	village	name/location, description	date	19th century	references
1	Vessem	De Lille, 1 barrow	BA	heath	Beex 1952b; Modderman 1953
2	Vessem	Achterste Hoek, 2 barrows			unpub.; E.M. Theunissen pers.comm.
3	Hoogeloon	Zwartenberg and Smousenberg, 2 barrows	MBA	heath	Beex 1957; idem 1964b
4	Hoogeloon	Broekenseind (E border of village), 1 barrow (and urnfield)	MBA	heath	Glasbergen 1955; Beex 1964b
5	Hoogeloon	Hoogpoort (not investigated)		arable	Beex 1964b
6	Hoogeloon	Kattenberg, 2 barrows (and urnfield)	EBA and MBA	heath	Modderman 1955b; Beex 1964b
7	Hapert/Eersel	at municipal border, 4 barrows (and urnfield)		heath	Beex 1964a; idem 1964b
8	Bladel	between Bladel and Netersel, Bladels Bos, 1 barrow	MBA	arable?	Beex 1955
9	Bladel	Kriekeschoor, 1 barrow	MBA	heath	unpublished
10	Bladel	Klein Terkooijen, 4 or 5 barrows	EBA or MBA	heath	Beex 1965
11	Bergeyk	Witrijt, 1 barrow	LN	heath	Beex 1957
12	Postel	Bladelstukken, 2 barrows		heath	Meex 1976

Table 5.2 Late Neolithic, Early and Middle Bronze Age barrows and barrow groups in the Bladel-Hoogeloon micro-region. The numbers correspond with figure 5.3.

the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, one for an Early Iron Age date, and one used during the early Middle Iron Age. For the majority, only a general date is available: most likely Early Iron Age, possibly beginning in the Late Bronze Age.[23] It is theoretically possible that all were in use at the same time, and even that all were used throughout the whole Urnfield period. Alternatively, not all cemeteries were in use throughout the Urnfield period, but were founded and abandoned in accordance with the specific and varying histories of the local communities in the region. This option is more appealing but cannot be substantiated without intensive research. The distribution map demonstrates, however, that the Bladel-Hoogeloon region was densely inhabited during the Urnfield period, with a peak in the Early Iron Age.

Even though demographic quantification is largely guesswork, it can be an insightful exercise and the Bladel-Hoogeloon region is one of the few regions for which it is feasible (table 5.4). The Dutch part of the micro-region covers about 175 square kilometres, and contains 25 urnfields. If there are five that have not been discovered, and if all were used at the same time, then 30 cemeteries could belong to 30 settlement territories with an average of six square kilometres each. With estimates of 20 to 40 persons per local community, this indicates a total population of 600 to 1200 persons, or 3.4 to 6.9 persons per square kilometre. Table 5.4 also shows population estimates based on other numbers of contemporary urnfields.

Little is known about the Middle and Late Iron Age habitation patterns, but more can be said about the Roman period. Figure 5.4 shows the distribution of find spots of the Roman period.[24] There are two striking differences from the Urnfield period. First, the southern part of the micro-region appears to have been completely abandoned. No traces of Roman-period occupation have been found here. The northern area, in contrast, has yielded plentiful evidence for habitation in the Roman era, but almost without exception all find spots are located in the old arable lands.[25] It is clear that between the Early Iron Age

[23] Early Iron Age pottery was found at all or almost all of the sites that were found through surveys; Late Bronze Age pottery occurred less frequently (N. Roymans personal communication).

[24] This is based on the records of N. Roymans. Cf. also Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

[25] Two exceptions are native-Roman cemeteries at Bladel-Kriekeschoor (Roymans 1982) and at Hoogeloon-Hoogpoort (Modderman 1960/1961a). They lie in premodern heathland zones, and may belong to settlements situated under the *essen*. Table 5.2 Late Neolithic, Early and Middle Bronze Age barrows and barrow groups in the Bladel-Hoogeloon micro-region. The numbers correspond with figure 5.3.

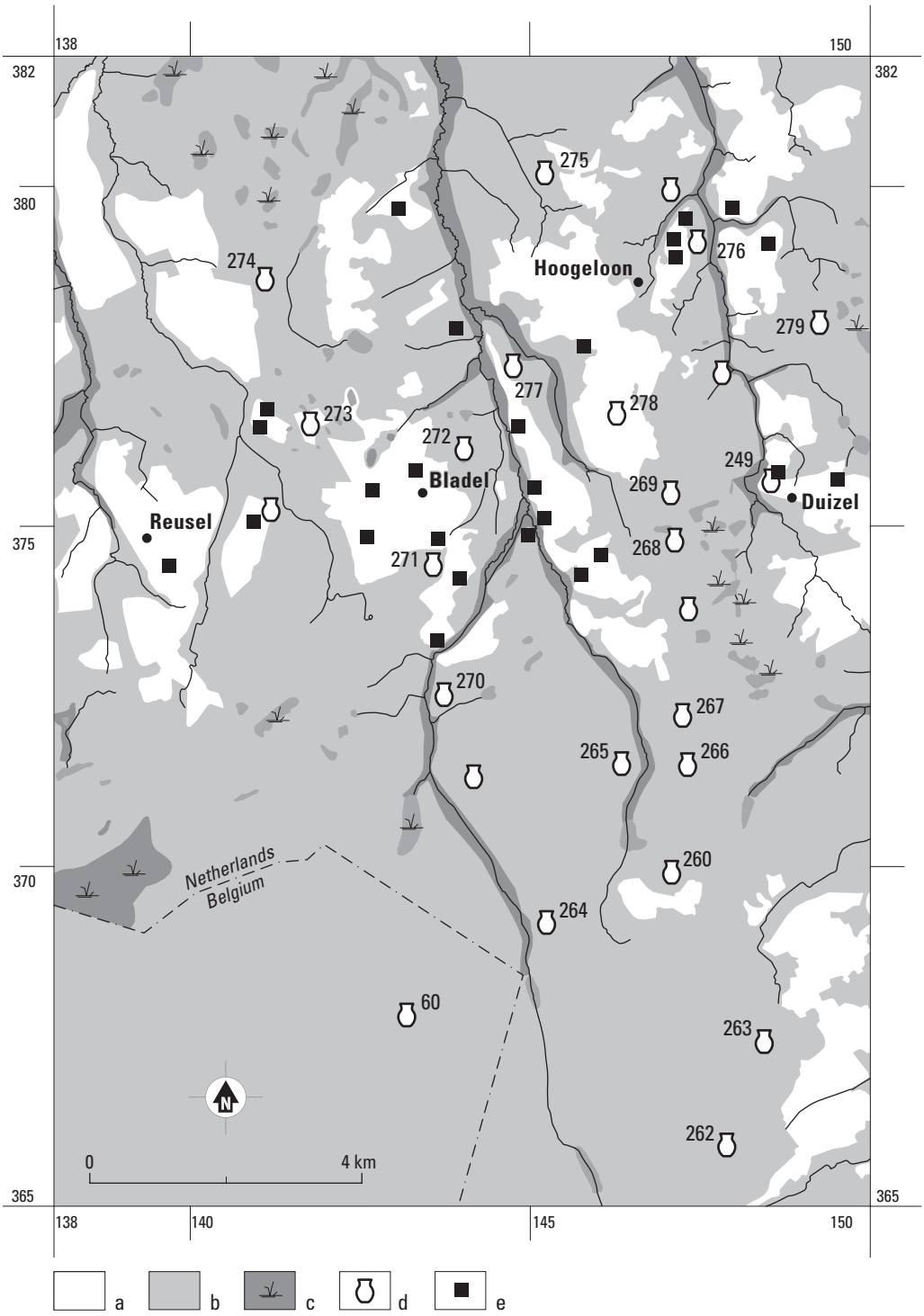

Fig. 5.4 Bladel-Hoogeloon micro-region, based on the 19th-century situation. Distribution of urnfields and Roman-period sites. The urnfield numbers correspond to appendix 2. a) *es* complex; b) uncultivated (predominantly heathland); c) fen/peat moor; d) urnfield; e) Roman-period site.

no	village	name/location	date	19th century	references
60	Postel	Grootbos		heath	unpublished
249	Duizel	Kerkakkers		arable	Beex 1964a
260	Bergeyk	Witrijt	LBA and EIA	heath	van Giffen 1937
262	Luyksgestel	Boscheind	LBA and EIA	heath	Willems 1935
263	Luyksgestel	border with Weebosch		heath	Hermans 1865
264	Hapert	border with Witreit, along Beerze		heath	Beex 1964b
265	Hapert	along Bredasebaan		heath	Beex 1964b
266	Hapert	W of Heestert		heath	Beex 1964b
267	Hapert	De Pan		heath	Beex 1964b
268	Hapert/Eersel	at municipal border	EIA	heath	Beex 1964a; idem 1964b
269	Hapert	N of main road		heath	Beex 1964b
270	Bladel	Achterste Hoef	LBA and EIA	heath	Roymans 1975
271	Bladel	Egypte		heath	Roymans 1975
272	Bladel	Schaapskuitje		heath	Roymans 1975
273	Bladel	Fransche Hoef		arable	Roymans 1975
274	Hulsel	Kouwenberg/ Kermisberg		heath	Bogaers 1967
275	Hoogeloon	Honshoef		heath	Beex 1964b
276	Hoogeloon	Kabouterberg		heath	Beex 1964b
277	Hoogeloon	Kattenberg		heath	Beex 1964b
278	Hoogeloon	Hoogpoort	MIA	arable	Modderman 1960-61
279	Hoogeloon	Broekenseind (E border of village)		heath	Beex 1964b

Table 5.3 Urnfields in the Bladel-Hoogeloon micro-region. The numbers correspond to the catalogue in appendix 2.

and the beginning of the Roman period a fundamental transformation in the ordering of the cultural landscape took place. There was a shift from a fairly even distribution of cemeteries (and thus probably settlement territories) to a distribution of clustered habitation separated by uninhabited areas.

Based on the numbers of known settlements (and cemeteries which are not in the direct vicinity of known settlements) a coarse estimate can be made of the population during the Roman period. There are 24 known settlements, but this number has to be increased to compensate for the poor visibility of settlements located under the *essen*. With an estimated 35 settlements, ranging from 10 to 75 inhabitants and averaging perhaps 20 persons, the total population for would have been around 700 persons. Other estimates are presented in table 5.5. The figures presented in the table indicate that the size of the population was about the same as in the Urnfield period. It has to be realised, however, that the southern part of the micro-region was not inhabited, which means that the actual densities in the northern half were significantly higher.

5.2.2 THE WEERT–NEDERWEERT REGION

The micro-region defined around Weert and Nederweert covers an area of 14 by 17 kilometres and lies between 25 and 34 metres above sea level (fig. 5.5).[26] The 19th-century landscape shows many of the same features as the Bladel and Someren regions. The northeastern part of this region were heathlands and peat marshes of the Peel which were drained and turned into pasture in the early decades of the 20th century. The southern and southeastern parts consisted of small coversand plateaus intersected by sever-

[26] This map is based on Roymans/Tol 1996b, 9, fig. 1.2, with some corrections and additions (Tol personal communciation).

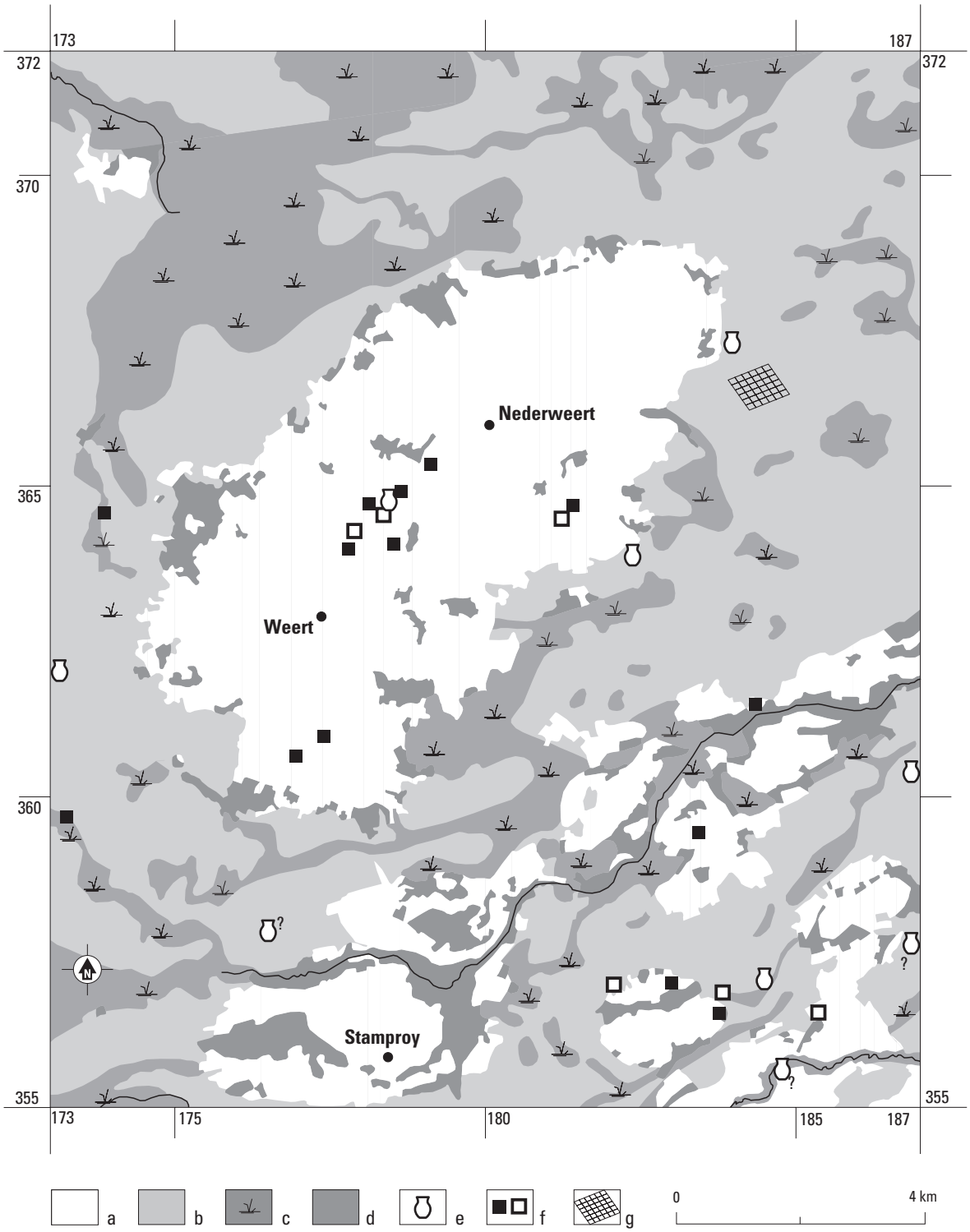

Fig. 5.5 Weert-Nederweert micro-region, based on the 19th-century situation. Distribution of urnfields and Roman-period settlements and cemeteries (situation as of 2000). a) old arable land; b) uncultivated (predominantly heathland); c) peat moor, stream valley; d) grassland; e) urnfield; f) Roman-period settlement (black) or cemetery (open); g) celtic field. After Roymans/Tol 1996b, fig. 1.2, with minor additions and corrections.

urnfields in use simultaneously	20 persons per settlement territory	40 persons per settlement territory	population density per square km
25	500	1000	2,9 – 5,7
30	600	1200	3,4 – 6,9
35	700	1400	4,0 – 8,0

Table 5.4 Urnfield-period population estimates for the Bladel-Hoogeloon region (175 sq. km.).

settlements inhabited simultaneously	12 persons per settlement	20 persons per settlement	30 persons per settlement	population density per square km
25	300	500	750	1,7 – 4,3
35	420	700	1050	2,4 – 6,0
40	480	800	1200	2,7 – 6,9

Table 5.5 Roman-period population estimates for the Bladel-Hoogeloon region (175 sq. km.).

al streams. The western part was dominated by extensive heathlands and sand-drifts. An area bordering on the old arable zone of Weert was already reforested before the middle of the 19th century. The centre of the region around the small town of Weert consisted from the Late Middle Ages of a large, unbroken complex of arable lands, much larger than the medieval arable zones around the villages in the other micro-regions. The arable zone around Weert covers a comparatively high plateau. To the north it drains into the streams of the Aa drainage, whereas the southern parts drain into the Meuse river to the east. The arable lands around Weert are generally covered by a thin *essen* cover only, presumably because the relatively loamy and fertile soils in the area made the application of *plaggen* manuring less pressing than in the sandier regions around Bladel and Someren.

The phase of heathland archaeology in this micro-region is restricted to the long history of interest in the large urnfield of Weert-Boshoverheide (along the western border of the map). Its discovery dates back to at least the later decades of the 19th century when workmen involved in reforesting the wastelands to the west of Weert came across numerous urns and grave goods. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the University of Amsterdam carried out salvage excavations here.[27] The phase of *essen* archaeology started more recently, with a large-scale excavation programme focusing on the area to the northeast of the town centre of Weert, where extensive tracts of old arable land are being developed for residential neighbourhoods and commercial sites. In the total of around 15 excavated hectares, remains have been encountered of an Early Iron Age urnfield, Iron Age farmsteads, a Late Iron Age bank-and-ditch enclosure, Roman-period farmsteads and nucleated settlements, two Roman-period cemeteries, as well as remains of the Early and High Middle Ages.[28] In addition to these excavations in the Weert region, local archaeologists have reported isolated finds, both in the heathlands and in the *essen*, of prehistoric and Roman date. Noteworthy are the remains of a celtic field complex encountered to the east of Nederweert, in a tract of heathland that had been reforested but was turned into arable land in the 1930s.[29]

[27] Bloemers 1988 (also for the 19th and early 20th century history of the urnfield); Kremer 1996.

[28] The main publications to date are: Roymans 1995c; Roymans/Tol 1996a; Roymans/Tol/Hiddink 1998.

[29] Bruekers 1996.

Seven cemeteries of the Urnfield period are known in the Weert-Nederweert region, in addition to which there are three locations which yielded finds that probably represent urnfields. Undoubtedly, there are more urnfields yet to be discovered under the *essen*. The excavated urnfield at Weert-Raak was in use in the period 800-550 BC, i.e. the Early Iron Age.[30] Estimates for the size of the local community that buried its dead in the cemetery produce an average of 36 persons, or about six families. The urnfield at Weert-Boshoverheide has been dated to both the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, and is significantly larger. At least 12 families, and probably more, buried their dead there, making it by far the largest known urnfield in the MDS region.[31] The northern part of the micro-region appears to have been empty in the Urnfield period. This may partly reflect a lack of activities by local archaeologists there, but it is probably also a result of the marshy, poorly drained landscape. As in the Bladel-Hoogeloon region, the distribution of urnfields indicates that the areas with lighter soils as well as the more loamy areas were inhabited in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age.

The end of the Late Iron Age and the Roman period produce a very different picture. The excavations in the old arable complex indicates a quite dense occupation on the loamy coversand plateau. In an area of 1.5 by 2 kilometres, no less than four native-Roman settlements as well as two cemeteries were found.[32] In the same area there is a Late Iron Age enclosure and a number of locations with Late Iron Age farmsteads (not shown on the map). Knowing that under the *essen* there are undoubtedly many more sites from the Late Iron Age and Roman period, population levels appear to have been high. Another Roman-period cemetery was found in the Nederweert area,[33] and three probable cemeteries in the southeastern corner of the micro-region suggest another dense cluster of occupation there. The three cemeteries are each located in a transitional zone between arable complexes and wastelands. This choice of location is known for other Roman-period cemeteries as well.[34] There are two Roman-period find spots in the wastelands to the west of Weert. There is also evidence at the same locations of occupation in the Early and High Middle Ages. In general, however, the wastelands are rather empty in comparison to the Urnfield period. Looking at the map as a whole, the habitation of the Late Iron Age and the Roman period is closely associated with the loamier soils.

5.2.3 THE SOMEREN REGION

The micro-region defined around the village of Someren measures eight by nine kilometres and consists of a typical coversand landscape, with gentle undulations between 21 and 29 metres above sea level. The Pleistocene coversands are mostly over two metres thick. Relatively small coversand plateaus are intersected by marshy lowlands and stream valleys of the Aa river and its tributaries, resulting in a subtly differentiated landscape of wet and dry and fertile and infertile zones.[35] The landscape around the middle of the 19th century shows a clear distinction between extensive open heathland, mainly in the west and south, and cultivated areas with *plaggen* soils on slightly loamier soils dominating the eastern and northern parts (figs. 5.6, 2.2).[36] This is where the village of Someren is located, in an elongated, slightly lower zone between two coversand plateaus with *essen* covers. Archaeological finds indicate that the village has

30 Tol 1998b, 18.

31 Kremer internal report, University of Amsterdam.

32 Tol 1998b, 31, fig. 2.18. Recently, excavations have uncovered yet another Roman-period settlement, slightly further to the northeast.

33 Bruekers 1989.

34 For example Schaijk-Gaalse Heide (Modderman/Isings 1960/1961). Cf. Hiddink in prep.

35 Kortlang 1999, 137, fig. 2b.

36 This map is based on Kortlang 1999, 136, fig. 2a.

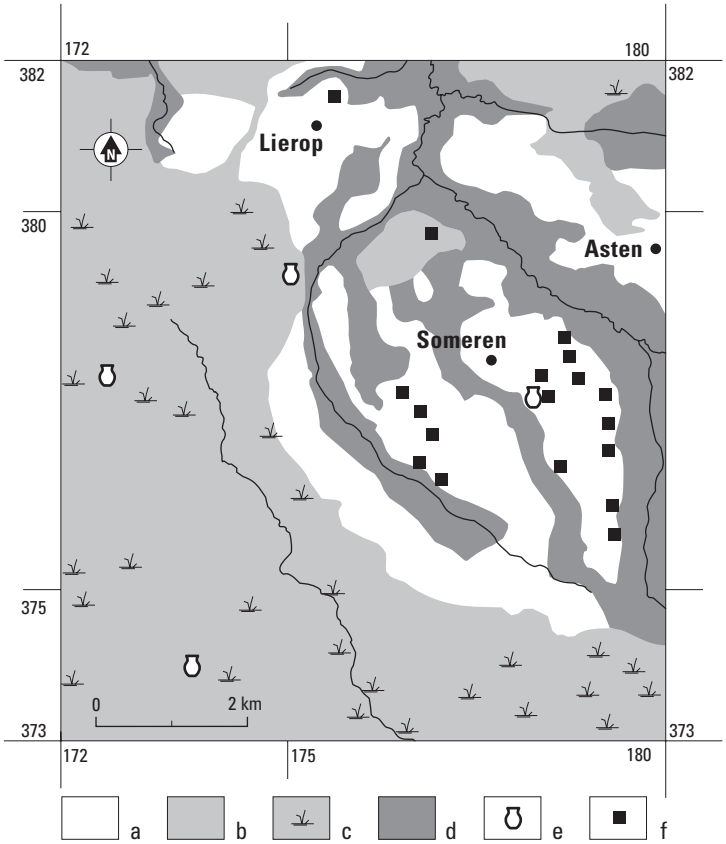

Fig. 5.6 Someren micro-region, based on the 19th-century situation (see fig. 2.2). Distribution of urnfields and Roman-period settlements. a) old arable land; b) uncultivated (predominantly heathland); c) fen/peat moor; d) grassland; e) urnfield; f) Roman-period settlement. After Kortlang 1999, fig. 2a.

been situated in this location from the 13th century AD onwards.[37] The 19th-century map also shows the presence of relatively broad areas of hay lands along the streams.

The first phase of archaeological research in this area relates to the reclamation of the heathlands in the early 20th century. Large areas of open heathland and marsh to the west of Someren and Lierop were reforested and reclaimed for cultivation and grassland between 1920 and 1950. In three locations these activities led to discoveries of Urnfield period cemeteries, of which the northernmost one, at the Philips Kampeerterrein, was partly excavated in 1953.[38] Reclamation activities were not accompanied by systematic archaeological surveys or excavations, and it is therefore not surprising that no contemporaneous, dispersed farmsteads were found. A more intensive phase of archaeological research in the *essen* zone began around 1990, when a local archaeologist discovered an Early Iron Age urnfield at a building site (Waterdael) in the arable zone to the east of Someren. Since then, large-scale excavations have preceded ongoing building programmes.[39] Until now, over 20 hectares have been exposed. Apart from the urnfield, the excavations to date have yielded the remains of numerous farmsteads from the Early Iron Age to the

[37] Schabbink 1999. The shift of habitation from the arable complex to the present location of the village has been dated to around AD 1250.

[38] Modderman 1955a; idem 1962/1963.

[39] Kortlang 1999. Cf. chapters 3 and 4 (this publication) on the urnfield and Iron Age farmsteads. Excavations have continued since the publication of Kortlang 1999, and have demonstrated habitation during the Iron Age and the Early Middle Ages to the south of the Waterdael area (Kortlang personal communciation).

urnfields in use simultaneously	20 persons per settlement territory	40 persons per settlement territory	population density per square km
6	120	240	1,7 – 3,3
8	160	320	2,2 – 4,4
10	200	400	2,8 – 5,6

Table 5.6 Urnfield-period population estimates for the Someren region (72 sq. km.).

Middle Roman period, as well as evidence of intensive occupation during the Merovingian, Carolingian and High Medieval periods.

Several stray axe finds of Neolithic date from the heathland zone indicate habitation of the area before the Iron Age, but there is no evidence at present for Bronze Age occupation of either the heathland or the old arable zone. It is unclear whether this is a true reflection of the habitation history or due to differences in the depositional and post-depositional transformations of Bronze Age and Iron Age/Roman-period remains. From the Early Iron Age onwards, however, there is clear evidence of habitation (fig. 5.6).[40] There are four known urnfields, of which at least three were in use in the Early Iron Age. Presumably, at least one or two more remain undiscovered underneath the *essen*. Especially on the loamy coversand ridge to the west of the medieval village one would expect another urnfield to be present. Not only does this area appear suitable for an Iron Age settlement territory from a physical-geographical point of view, but also isolated finds of Iron Age pottery (not shown on the map) point in that direction. This suggests that there were at least four and possibly six or more local communities and settlement territories in the Early Iron Age. The distribution of the urnfields on the map suggests that at this time the landscape was largely filled with settlement territories, that is to say, both the areas with lighter soils and with loamier soils were occupied. Table 5.6 shows estimates for the Early Iron Age population size and density in the Someren area. The Waterdael urnfield at Someren belonged to a local community of between 20 and 30 persons.[41] If the others were of equal size, then the numbers are likely to have been towards the lower end of the estimates given in the table. It appears that the population density in the Someren area was somewhat lower than in the Bladel-Hoogeloon area.

Evidence for Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age habitation is restricted to the excavated areas in the arable zone east of Someren. Apart from a few undated graves near farmhouses there are no indications of cemeteries. The extensive clusters of farmsteads of this period indicate that there was at least one settlement territory in the micro-region, but there are probably others whose habitation traces remain covered by the *essen* or have been destroyed by the recent expansion of the village of Someren. We are better informed about the Roman period. Two Early Roman period farmsteads were excavated near the Early Iron Age urnfield, while an Early Roman inhumation grave with a sword, razor and amphora was found in the ditch of a long barrow.[42] A few hundred metres to the northeast nine farmsteads and three wells dating to the Early and Middle Roman period were excavated in a small-scale excavation.[43] More

[40] The foundation of the urnfield of Someren-Waterdael around 650 BC was preceded or perhaps accompanied by two deposits of a bronze axe in the Aa stream in the direct vicinity of the excavated urnfield and associated Early Iron Age farmsteads. The axes can be dated on typological grounds to the 2nd half of the Late Bronze Age or the beginning of the Early Iron Age (D. Fontijn personal communciation; idem 2002b).

[41] Kortlang 1999, 166-167.

[42] Roymans/Kortlang 1993, 32-33.

[43] Kortlang personal communication. This is the northernmost excavation area indicated on the map in Kortlang 1999, 137, fig. 2b.

settlements inhabited simultaneously	12 persons per settlement	20 persons per settlement	30 persons per settlement	population density per square km
15	180	300	450	2,5 – 4,2
20	240	400	600	3,3 - 8,3
25	300	500	750	4,2 – 10,4

Table 5.7 Roman-period population estimates for the Someren region (72 sq. km.).

information about the micro-regional settlement patterns comes from the intensive work of local archaeologists, who made observations at numerous places where the *es* cover was removed for construction activities. There is a considerable number of find spots with material from the Roman period (fig. 5.6).[44] All appear to represent the remains of farmsteads and settlements. As in the Bladel-Hoogeloon and the Weert-Nederweert regions, the clustered occurrence of the Roman-period sites is striking. The coversand plateaus with relatively high loam contents appear to have been densely inhabited (and undoubtedly denser than the map shows), whereas the wastelands to the west of Someren have not yielded any evidence of habitation. Admittedly, those areas have been under forest for the last sixty years or more, but it is significant that before that time several urnfields were encountered but no phenomena with a comparable archaeological visibility, such as native-Roman cemeteries or nucleated settlements.

Estimates for population densities in the Someren micro-region during the Roman period are presented in table 5.7. With a population estimate of 400 persons, the density in the Someren region may have been somewhat higher than in the Urnfield period, and also higher than in the Bladel-Hoogeloon region in the Roman period.

5.2.4 THE OSS REGION

The Oss micro-region is defined here as an area of nine by nine kilometres around the town of Oss. From a geomorphological point of view, the Oss micro-region differs somewhat from the three other regions. The medieval village of Oss is situated on the northern flank of an elongated ENE-WSW coversand ridge, while the southeastern corner of the region rises up to the uplifted zone of the Peelhorst. The 19th-century arable lands around Oss and Berghem form a large, unbroken complex, bordered to the south by extensive wastelands and sand-drifts (fig. 5.7). To the north of Oss, the land dips down towards the Meuse river, and the coversands make way for clays and fine sandy sediments deposited by the river. Here, the 19th-century landscape is quite different from that in the other micro-regions, with grassland for pasture as the predominant element.

Even in this region where the heathlands make up a minority of the landscape, archaeological interest began with finds of prehistoric barrows in the early decades of the 20th century. In the heathlands to the south of Oss a 'chiefly' Hallstatt C situla grave was found in 1933, under the remains of a massive

[44] This map differs slightly from Kortlang 1999, 136, fig.2 because several find spots which were situated very close to each other have been combined. This was done to make the map more comparable to that of the Oss micro-region, where only sites which could be clearly identified (mostly in excavations) as nucleated settlements or cemeteries have been included. However, from the excavations at Someren-Waterdael we know that isolated Early Roman period farmsteads occurred in the region, and it is likely that some of the find spots shown on the map represent such isolated farmsteads.

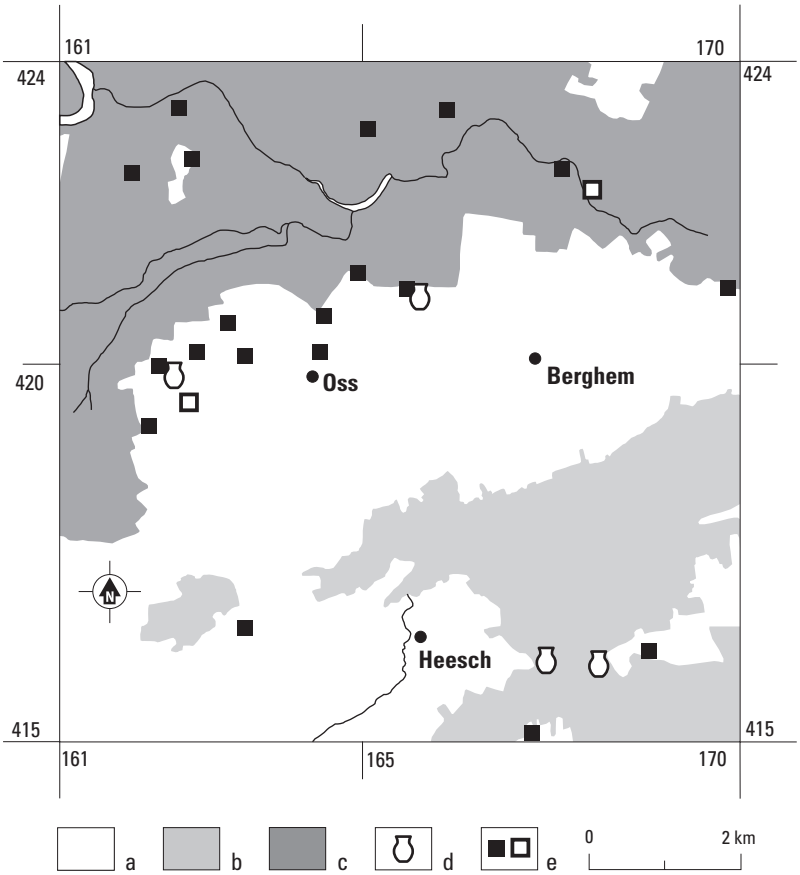

Fig. 5.7 Oss micro-region, based on the 19th-century situation. Distribution of urnfields and Roman-period settlements and cemeteries. a) arable cultivation; b) uncultivated (predominantly heathland); c) grassland; d) urnfield/Urnfield period graves; f) Roman-period settlement (black) or cemetery (open).

barrow with a diameter of over 50 metres.[45] Several Bronze Age and Iron Age barrows were later investigated somewhat further to the east, but no systematic investigations of other parts of the heathlands have been undertaken. The next main phase of archaeological research, starting in the 1970s, turned away from the heathlands to the arable lands to the northwest and north of the town of Oss. The University of Leiden has conducted large-scale excavations in the Oss region for over 25 years, bringing to light remains of farmsteads and settlements dating from the Early/Middle Bronze Age to the Roman period, as well as cemeteries and graves of the Iron Age and Roman period. Through the work of local archaeologists as well as through surveys carried out by the University of Leiden, a large number of find spots are known in the Holocene river landscape to the north.[46]

Habitation in the Middle Bronze Age is attested for both the heathlands and the arable zone, in the form of barrows at the Zevenbergen in the south, and dispersed farmsteads and other occupation traces in the excavations at Oss. A similar pattern existed in the Early Iron Age. The excavations have yielded a number of isolated farmsteads as well as a small urnfield dating to the Early Iron Age and beginning of the Middle Iron Age at Oss-IJsselstraat and a more dispersed group of Early Iron Age graves at

[45] Holwerda 1934; Modderman 1964; Fokkens 1997b; Fokkens/Jansen 1998.

[46] The data for this zone comes from Verwers 1998, map sheet 1.

Oss-Ussen.[47] To the south lie the above-mentioned burial places. The Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age are represented by relatively dense occupation traces in the arable zones, encountered in the excavations. From the Late Iron Age onwards, the riverine region as well as the coversand ridge bordering it became quite densely inhabited. The excavations by the Leiden team have yielded nine distinct Roman-period settlements in an area of roughly two by four kilometres (each represented by a single symbol on fig. 5.7).[48] The Roman period is much less well represented in the southern part of the micro-region. There are three isolated find spots, none of which were found in the heathlands.[49] Even though habitation patterns in the Oss micro-region do not demonstrate the same clear-cut contraction of occupation on to the loamier soils that occurs in the other regions in the course of the Iron Age, the scant evidence for the heathlands does not indicate that those zones remained inhabited after the Urnfield period.

The archaeological work in the region around the town of Oss offers unique possibilities for investigating the relationships between settlements and communities in the Roman period. In effect, as Dieke Wesselingh has recently demonstrated, a level of analysis between the individual settlement and the micro-region as it has been defined here is feasible for the Ussen area.[50] Both in the pre-Flavian period and later there is a clear distinction between Westerveld (see 4.5) and a group of five smaller settlements situated around it. The Westerveld settlement is by far the largest, and is enclosed by a rectangular, double system of impressive ditches. Several early imports among the find material also set it apart from the other settlements, while after the Flavian period it included a romanised farmhouse. As Wesselingh suggests, while these elements point to the presence of a local elite in the Westerveld settlement, the degree of social differentiation should not be overstated.[51] To her, the lack of a marked differentiation between the settlements and the absence of people who were not dependent on farming for their subsistence indicates that the settlements of the Oss-Ussen area together formed a single local community. The local chiefs, who would already have been present in the late prehistoric period, became more visible but not necessarily more powerful.[52]

5.2.5 THE FOUR MICRO-REGIONS COMPARED

Several general trends are brought out when the four micro-regions are compared. First, the Urnfield period is well represented in the Bladel-Hoogeloon, Weert-Nederweert and Someren regions, and undoubtedly reflects a situation of relatively high population numbers and densities. This may well be the case at Oss as well, but there is insufficient information for a reliable reconstruction of the distribution of settlement territories in that micro-region.

Second, local communities in the Urnfield period were settled in all inhabitable zones of the landscape, that is both in the sandier parts which were prone to degradation and the loamier parts that were

47 Oss-IJsselstraat: Wesselingh 1993; Oss-Ussen: Van der Sanden 1998c. The Oss-Ussen graves do not appear to have been clustered into a 'true' urnfield as was common elsewhere. Even though it is unclear whether this is the result of post-depositional processes or represents a local variation in the burial practices, the graves are represented as an urnfield on the map in order to show the presence of Urnfield-period habitation to the northwest of the town of Oss. The map does not show traces of occupation in the meadowlands north of Oss, but Iron Age finds from survey projects indicate that those zones of the landscape were inhabited as well (Fokkens 2000).

48 Wesselingh 2000, 203, 205, fig. 216.

49 From Verwers 1998, map sheet 1.

50 Wesselingh 2000, 213-226. The Oss-Ussen area lies to the northwest of the centre of Oss, as depicted on map 5.8. Earlier, Slofstra (1991b) observed a distinction between the enclosed Westerveld settlement and the other small settlements without enclosures, which he interpreted in terms of a socio-political hierarchy.

51 Wesselingh 2000, 217-221.

52 Wesselingh 2000, 223.

more fertile and more resistant to secondary podzolisation. This variation in the choice of location of settlement territories already existed in the Middle Bronze Age, albeit in a much more scattered, diffuse pattern. The distribution of urnfields in the first three micro-regions fits in well with a model of a centrally located urnfield in each settlement territory and of adjacent territories in a largely filled-in landscape.

Third, a major transformation occurred in the ordering of the inhabited landscape during some phase between the Urnfield period and the Early Roman period. In all four micro-regions, the distribution of the population over the landscape changed fundamentally. In the Roman period, practically none of the areas with predominantly lighter and more easily degradable soils are used for habitation, whereas previously they were densely settled. Instead, the population was clustered in the more fertile zones of the landscape. This clustered distribution was accompanied by micro-regional population densities that are at least as high as or higher than in the Urnfield period, as demonstrated by the close proximity between nucleated settlements in the clusters of settlements that have been excavated in Oss and Weert.

There are several basic questions which need to be addressed before a further interpretation of this fundamental reordering is possible. Is it a phenomenon that occurs throughout the MDS region, or is it restricted to the four micro-regions? And, is it possible to identify more precisely when it took place? It could be associated with the Roman period, but the possibility that it occurred during the hard-to-recognise phase of the Middle and Late Iron Age needs to be considered seriously. These questions will be investigated in the following section.

5.3 REGIONAL SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

5.3.1 THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

One of the four selected micro-regions - the Oss region - has yielded significant evidence for Middle Bronze Age habitation, while in the Bladel-Hoogeloon area a number of tumuli and barrow groups attest to habitation. In comparison to the Urnfield period, the size of the data set is thus small. Evidence from other parts of the MDS region shows a similar picture to that from the micro-regions. Excavations in the old arable zones around Geldrop, Boxmeer, and Venray have come up with evidence for byre-houses and other settlement traces.[53] At Haps and Mierlo-Hout, barrows of the Middle Bronze Age preceded urnfields.[54] The extensive barrow evidence from the heathlands is accompanied by traces of a Middle Bronze Age byre-house from the heathlands near Loon op Zand.[55] In other words, both the old arable zones and the heathlands of the 19th-century landscape were used for habitation.

On a regional scale, however, only the distribution of barrows and barrow groups can be used to infer the density of habitation and the distribution of the population. Theunissen has mapped 77 Late Neolithic, Early and Middle Bronze Age barrows and barrow groups in the MDS region.[56] Their distri-

[53] Geldrop: Wesdorp 1997; Venray: Stoepker 1997; Boxmeer: Hiddink 2000a. See table 5.7 for other sites where more or less substantial remains of the Middle Bronze Age have been found.

[54] Mierlo-Hout: Tol 1999, 109; Haps: Verwers 1972.

[55] Roymans/Hiddink 1991a.

[56] Theunissen 1999, 48, fig. 3.9. The great majority of these date to the Middle Bronze Age. They represent 230 'mound periods' (Theunissen 1999, 57, table 3.2), of which 36 date to the Late Neolithic, the Early Bronze Age, or the Early Bronze Age or Middle Bronze Age A phase. It is unclear from Theunissen's dissertation how many barrows these 36 mound periods represent, but presumably less than 25.

bution shows two distinct clusters, one in the Kempen to the southwest of Eindhoven, and one on the Dutch and Belgian sides of the border south of Tilburg. In other areas the distribution is less dense, while there are also regions with a complete lack of evidence of barrows. Theunissen discusses this unequal distribution pattern.[57] She concludes that in some well-investigated but apparently 'empty' regions, in particular the Roerstreek in Dutch Limburg, there was habitation in the Middle Bronze Age but that this has remained undetected, possibly as a result of different burial practices, whereas in other areas the absence of barrows may well indicate a very low intensity of habitation. Unfortunately, there are also areas where a lack of sustained work by amateur and professional archaeologists makes it impossible to assess the reasons for the absence of Middle Bronze Age remains.

From a diachronic perspective, it is interesting to compare regional population densities in the Middle Bronze Age with those of the Urnfield period. Again, only the cemeteries provide useful information in this respect. For a comparison of the numbers it is necessary to take into account, however, that the depositional and post-depositional factors behind the Middle Bronze Age barrows and the urnfields are not identical (see section 5.1). Barrows and urnfields were affected to the same degree by the formation of *essen*, and their chances of discovery in the heathlands in the 19th and early 20th century were not dissimilar. A more fundamental difference, however, stems from the contrast between the fixed nature of urnfields and the dispersed locations of Middle Bronze Age barrows. Several dispersed barrows may in fact have belonged to the same local community. In order to compensate for this, Roymans and Kortlang have combined all barrows and barrow groups within a distance of 1.5 kilometre from each other.[58] In this way they arrive at a count of 55 barrow groups in the Middle Bronze Age. As will be described below, the figures for Late Bronze Age and especially Early Iron Age urnfields are considerably higher. This increase remains when the differences in the duration of the three periods are taken into account. It indicates that the regional population density in the Middle Bronze Age was significantly lower than in the Urnfield period. The data do not allow a further quantification of the density.

In sum, during the Middle Bronze Age, settlement territories occupied both the sandier and loamier landscape zones, albeit in most areas at low population densities. Even though the present-day distribution of known barrows is affected by many distorting factors, habitation in the areas with the densest concentrations of barrows was probably comparatively intensive. Some parts of the MDS region appear to have remained largely uninhabited.

5.3.2 THE URNFIELD PERIOD

The evidence from the four micro-regions consistently shows a densely inhabited landscape in the Urnfield period, with settlement territories both in the heathlands and the *essen* zones. The distribution map of urnfields in the MDS region (figs. 4.3, 4.5, appendix 1) conforms to this picture and shows that despite local variation, the density of urnfields is high in almost all the inhabitable areas. No longer are there extensive 'empty' regions as in the Middle Bronze Age. The increase in the number of burial places continued throughout the Late Bronze Age and into the Early Iron Age.[59] Of all urnfields for which dating evidence is available, 84 were used for burials in the Late Bronze Age, as against 192 in the Early Iron Age. This represents a more than three-fold increase from the 55 barrow groups of the Middle Bronze

[57] Theunissen 1999, 49-54. For the Roerstreek she bases her conclusion on the finds of metal objects in wet contexts.

[58] Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 38-39, footnote 13, fig. 2. Not combined were barrows that were separated by streams or moors.

[59] Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 38-39, fig. 2.

urnfields in use simultaneously	total population at 20 persons per settlement territory	total population at 40 persons per settlement territory
350	7,000	14,000
500	10,000	20,000
750	15,000	30,000

Table 5.8 Population estimates for the MDS region in the Early Iron Age, based on urnfields and estimates for the number of inhabitants of a settlement territory.

Age. There has been some debate about the significance of this increase in terms of demographic developments. While Roymans and Kortlang have taken this as evidence for a strong demographic expansion,[60] Fokkens has pointed out that differential destruction of Middle Bronze Age barrows and Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age urnfields leads to an under-representation of the earlier period.[61] This is undoubtedly the case, but its effects are compensated for by the grouping of largely dispersed Middle Bronze Age barrows.[62] Middle Bronze Age population levels may have been somewhat higher than they seem at present. Moreover, if shorter time frames could be evaluated, the picture of demographic development would certainly become much more differentiated. But given the temporal resolution that is available, the great increase in the number of cemeteries from the Middle Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age cannot, in my opinion, be interpreted as representing other than a considerable growth of the population. If the numbers are correct, much of this growth should probably be attributed to the Early Iron Age (see also 6.2.1).

Based on the total number of known urnfields, a rough idea can be gained of the size of the population in the MDS region in the Early Iron Age. A total of 192 urnfields are known to date to the Early Iron Age. On top of that, it is probable that the majority of the 167 urnfields that lack more precise dating evidence than Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age were used in the Early Iron Age. An estimate of 100 will be used. Finally, a number of urnfields will have disappeared without documentation, and a number of urnfields still remain undetected under the *essen*. These are difficult to quantify, but a combined figure of 200 appears to be a fair estimate. This brings the total number of urnfields that were used in the Early Iron Age to 492, or about 500. With local communities averaging between 20 and 40 persons, the total population of the MDS region amounted to between 10,000 and 20,000 persons. Table 5.8 shows that it is unlikely that the population was substantially larger than 20,000. A population of 30,000 persons would require at least 750 simultaneously used urnfields, and there is no reason to assume that the discrepancy between the number of known urnfields and that of undetected or lost urnfields is as wide as that.

These figures put the demographic 'boom' of the Early Iron Age into perspective. The overall population density may not have been more than about one or two persons per square kilometre, or perhaps three when the large peat moors of the Peel and western Noord-Brabant are omitted. In the more dense-

[60] See also Roymans 1991, 66-67 for an earlier statement.

[61] Fokkens 1997a, 364. In particular the proposed demographic growth during the Late Bronze Age is problematic in his opinion, because of the scarcity of well-dated settlement traces from that period. This scarcity indeed indicates that there are problems with our current understanding of the social and demographic transformations taking place during the first centuries of the first millennium BC, but they do not in my opinion negate the evidence for Late Bronze Age habitation stemming from the urnfields.

[62] In the calculation method used by Roymans and Kortlang, one remaining Middle Bronze Age barrow in an area is enough for the area to be counted as 'inhabited'. There would have been many more potential burial sites in a Middle Bronze Age settlement territory than in the Urnfield period, and therefore a higher chance of the preservation of at least one burial site.

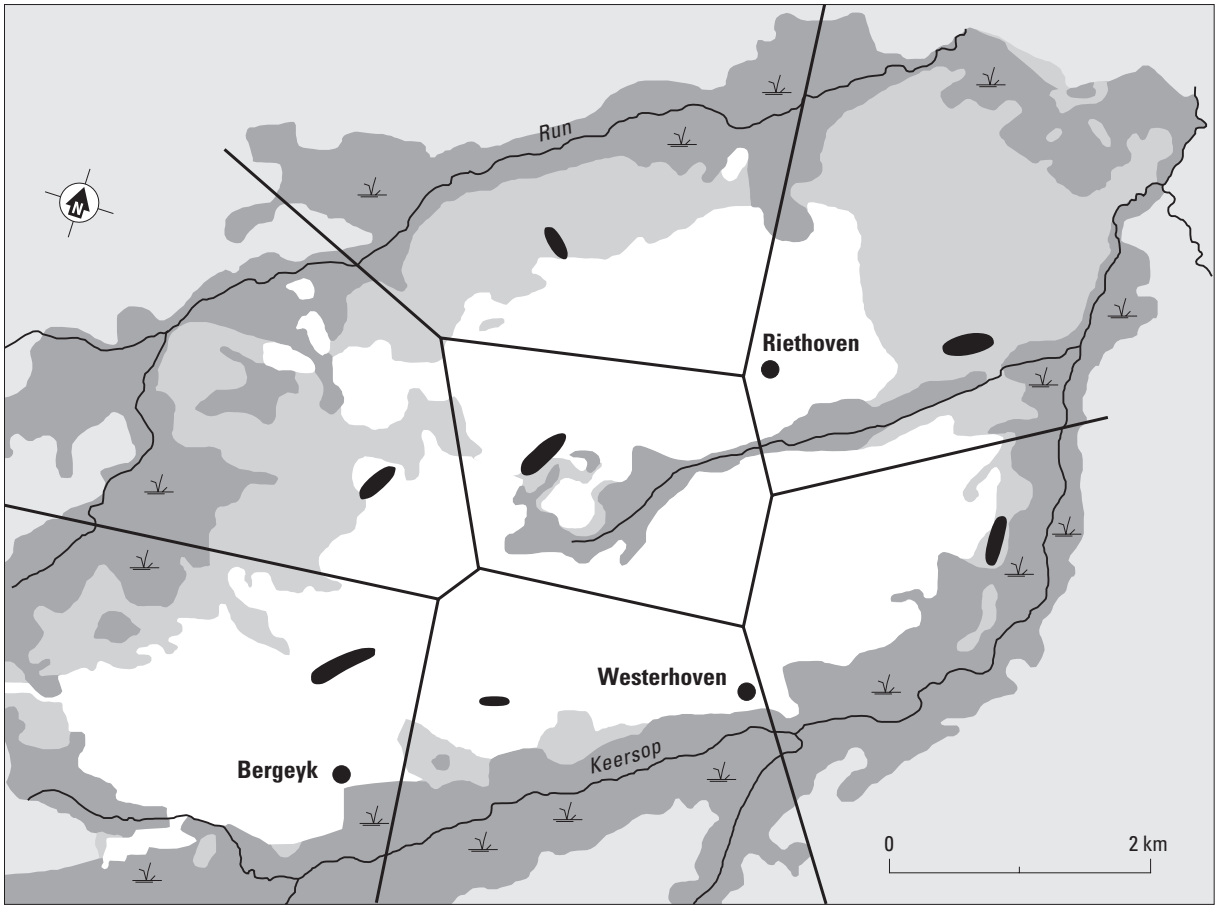

Fig. 5.8 Bergeyk-Riethoven micro-region. Distribution of urnfields and hypothetical boundaries of settlement territories. Only the area between the Run and Keersop streams has been mapped. After Slofstra 1991a, fig. 4.

ly inhabited parts of the MDS region, a population density of four to five persons per square kilometre may have been reached. However, the possible significance of the increase in population with respect to social life, land use, subsistence and territoriality cannot be inferred from the figures. This issue will be discussed in the following section and the final chapter.

A model can now be described for the distribution of settlement territories over the landscape. It refers particularly to the more densely occupied parts of the MDS region. The high numbers and dense distributions of urnfields suggests that the whole landscape was part of a rather fixed territorial ordering. Settlement territories, each centred around fixed urnfields and celtic field complexes, directly bordered on each other. Consequently, the amount of land that local communities could claim as their own was restricted by the presence of nearby communities and their settlement territories. A micro-region around Riethoven, between the Keersop and the Run streams, can illustrate this ordering (fig. 5.8). The distribution of urnfields suggests that there may have been seven settlement territories (or more if there are other urnfields under the *essen*). If the hypothetical borders at all reflect the prehistoric situation, it appears that each local community had access to land on both the higher coversand plateaus and the somewhat lower areas towards the streams.

5.3.3 THE MIDDLE IRON AGE AND EARLY LATE IRON AGE

In 1991 and 1995 articles Nico Roymans advanced the hypothesis that the Middle Iron Age was a period of demographic regression and a major shift in the settlement patterns.[63] From the study of the four micro-regions it has become clear that information regarding the Middle and Late Iron Age occupation is limited and restricted to the excavated areas in the *essen* landscape. The question is how to interpret the dearth of finds for these periods in comparison to the rich data set of the Urnfield period. Does it result from a regional demographic decline, or from depositional factors (i.e. the abandonment of the practice of using communal cemeteries) or post-depositional factors (i.e. Middle and Late Iron Age occupation being restricted to the *essen* zones)? Even though large-scale excavations have increased the amount of information on Iron Age habitation since Roymans first advanced his hypothesis, this question is still difficult to answer.

There are two features of the archaeological record that could point to a demographic decline. The first is the dramatic decrease in urnfield cemeteries from the Early Iron Age to the Middle Iron Age, followed by the almost complete absence of Middle and Late Iron Age cemeteries. There are no more than 34 urnfields with dating evidence that points to the Middle Iron Age, as against 192 in the Early Iron Age.[64] A problem with this argument is that the drop in numbers could be the result of the abandonment of settlement territories, but equally of changes in burial practices (see also chapter 4.2). The latter is certainly a factor, but that does not rule out the possibility of a concurrent abandonment phase. The second argument could be based on the absence of Middle and Late Iron Age habitation traces in the former heathlands. Even in the Bladel-Hoogeloon region that has been surveyed (albeit unsystematically) over the course of many years, finds from recently reclaimed fields rarely include artefacts that postdate the Urnfield period. This is also the case in the other micro-regions. The only way to find out more about the extent of this apparent discontinuity of habitation would be through large-scale excavations in the heathland zones, but given the nature of almost all archaeological fieldwork – salvage excavations in the old arable zones around expanding villages and towns – this is not a feasible option at present. Even so, the available evidence points towards an absence of habitation in the heathland zones from the Middle Iron Age onwards. However, the absence of habitation in the heathlands cannot be taken to indicate the absence of habitation in the old arable zones, and is therefore not enough to convincingly demonstrate a demographic decline on a regional scale.

Table 5.9 shows the major excavations in the old arable zones up to 1999 and the periods which are represented among the finds. The Urnfield period has been encountered at almost all sites, either as urnfields or isolated farmsteads. The Middle and Late Iron Age are not represented everywhere, but at a considerable number of sites, and certainly at all the largest ones. The excavations at Weert are instructive in this respect, as they showed no evidence for Middle Iron Age occupation during the first years of the project, while later on at least three locations were discovered with Middle Iron Age occupation traces.[65] This suggests that even in large-scale excavations the usually dispersed traces of this period are easy to overlook. Based on this table it is difficult to argue for a demographic regression across the MDS region. Instead, in combination with the absence of finds in the former heathlands, the table suggests that it is in this period that a fundamental shift in the habitation patterns took place: from a fairly regular distribution of settlement territories over the landscape, on the higher and sandier coversand ridges as well as on the loamier plateaus, to a contracted pattern of settlement territories in the loamier zones only. The habitation histories of the four micro-regions already indicated that such a shift took place at some point before the end of the Late Iron Age, and the maps showed a clear contrast between the Urnfield period

[63] Roymans 1991, 63-72; idem 1995a, 7-9.

[64] Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 38-39, fig. 2.

[65] Tol 1998b, 23.

site	ha	MBA	LBA/EIA	MIA/ early LIA	late LIA/ RP	LRP	EMA	HMA	remarks
Oss	55	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	Ussen and later excavations
Someren	20	-	x	x	x	-	x	x	
Weert	15	x	x	x	x	-	x	x	
Breda	15	x	-	x	x	x	x	x	Emer-, Steen- and Huifakker
Mierlo-Hout	7	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	including Brandevoort
Meerhoven	6	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	
Geldrop	6	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Lieshout	6	-	x	x	x	-	-	x	Beekseweg
Dommelen	5	x	-	x	x	-	x	x	
Hoogeloon	4,5	x	x	-	x	-	-	-	
St.Oedenrode	4	x	x	-	x	-	-	x	Everse Akkers
Donk	4	-	x	x	x	x	-	-	
Neerharen-Rekem	4	-	x	x	x	x	-	-	
Breda	3	x	x	-	x	-	-	-	Moskes
Haps	3	x	x	x	x	-	x	x	
Beegden	3	x	x	-	x	-	-	-	
Den Dungen	2,5	x	x	-	x	-	-	-	
Gennep	2	-	x	-	x	x	x	-	
Venray	2	x	x	-	x	-	x	x	
Boxmeer	2	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	

Table 5.9 Excavations in old arable zones with more than 2 hectares of excavated terrain and periods from the Middle Bronze Age to the High Middle Ages represented among the finds (situation as of 2000). After Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

and the Roman period. It now becomes likely that many of the sandier plateaus were given up for habitation as early as the Middle Iron Age.

Rather than opting for a demographic regression on a regional scale, it may therefore be more fruitful to think of the developments after the end of the Urnfield period as a fundamental reordering of the inhabited landscape corresponding to the abandonment of the sandier parts and a concentration of the population on the loamier parts of the landscape. Given that many Urnfield-period settlement territories would have been wholly situated in the heathland zones, as the four micro-regions show, this indicates that for major parts of the MDS region numerous settlement territories would indeed have been given up and the total population there would have dropped significantly. In areas bordering the Holocene river landscape, on the other hand, the population appears to have increased. A good example is the Oss micro-region. The riverine region itself also witnessed a great increase in the population in the Middle and Late Iron Age.[66]

5.3.4 THE LATE IRON AGE AND THE BEGINNING OF THE ROMAN PERIOD

The four micro-regions all yielded ample evidence of habitation in the zones of the old arable lands in the Early Roman period. Table 5.9 indicates that finds of the Roman period were encountered at all of the larger *essen* excavations within and outside the micro-regions. In many cases these represent substantial remains of settlements and cemeteries (see chapter 4). Whereas before the large-scale *essen* excavations began around 25 years ago it seemed that the MDS region was only sparsely settled in the Roman period, it has now become clear that it was in fact a phase of high population densities in many parts of the MDS region. The restricted distribution of habitation in the loamier zones was clearly also a region-wide

phenomenon. This is illustrated by map 5.9.[67] It shows the excavated and partially excavated settlements of the Roman period and their location in the former heathlands or *essen* zone. With the exception of a very small group, all Roman-period settlements were found under the *essen*. The most notable exception is the settlement of Riethoven-Heesmortel, excavated by the Free University in the early 1990s.[68]

I suggested above that the contraction of habitation on to the loamier soils probably took place as early as the Middle Iron Age. This is not easy to substantiate with good data, especially because the absence of finds from the heathlands is a somewhat problematic marker of the absence of habitation in those areas. However, at least for the later part of the Late Iron Age it is possible to provide additional evidence that the contraction had already taken place at that time. This comes from the distribution of La Tène glass bracelets.[69] These brightly coloured bracelets occur with high frequencies between ca. 200 BC and AD 25, especially in the northern part of the MDS region and the neighbouring riverine areas to the north.[70] They are normally associated with settlement refuse around farmsteads, and appear to have been discarded at high rates. Examples from cemeteries tend to be deformed by secondary burning. As glass bracelets are easy to spot and readily identifiable, they frequently occur in survey assemblages and their distribution thus reflects to some extent the distribution of Late Iron Age settlements and cemeteries. Even though a thorough inventory of glass bracelets from survey assemblages has not been made, they are commonly found in the old arable lands and are practically unknown from the heathland zones.[71]

It is likely that the new ordering of the inhabited landscape was accompanied by changes in the structure of settlement territories and their distribution over the landscape. Concentrations of settlements were separated by extensive uninhabited (which does not mean unused) areas. One should perhaps think for this period of dense concentrations of settlement territories in the loamier zones, each perhaps smaller than in the Urnfield period. The heathland areas may have been part of the territorial ordering of the landscape, but may also have been less strictly divided. One could imagine that the wastelands were exploited communally by several local communities for sheep herding and sod cutting.[72]

5.3.5 SUMMARY

To sum up, both in time and space there was considerable demographic variation during the last 1500 years BC. Between the Middle Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age, there was an increase in the population accompanied by a process of landscape infilling. This culminated in the Early Iron Age, when all inhabitable zones in most parts of the MDS region had been settled and were part of a territorially ordered landscape. A major shift took place at the end of the Urnfield period or during the Middle Iron Age. This entailed a displacement of the communities living on the higher and sandier coversand plateaus, and a concentration of the population on the loamier soils. The result was a demographic regression in the core area of the MDS region and an increase in the population in other areas, in particular the river landscape to the north and the areas bordering on it. The end of the Late Iron Age witnessed a new phase of strong population growth throughout the MDS region, but in contrast to the Urnfield period the distribution of settlement territories was almost completely restricted to the loam-rich parts of the landscape.

66 Willems 1984a, 76-88. According to his figure 23 (and discussion on p. 223), the number of settlements in the eastern river area grew from 30 in the Early Iron Age to 60 in the Middle Iron Age and to 150 to 240 in the Late Iron Age.

67 Cf. Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

68 Slofstra/Lammers/Aarts 1993.

69 Cf. Peddemors 1975; Roymans/van Rooijen 1993; Roymans 1996c on La Tène glass bracelets in the southern Netherlands.

70 Roymans/Van Rooijen 1993.

71 Roymans personal communication.

72 Roymans/Gerritsen 2002; this publication, chapter 6.

5.4 CHANGING SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

5.4.1 POPULATION DENSITIES AND SOIL DEGRADATION, AN ENVIRONMENTAL MODEL

The most significant transformation in habitation patterns during the last millennium BC was shown to be a contraction of settlement territories in the loamier parts of the landscape in the course of the Middle Iron Age, following a period of strong demographic expansion in the Urnfield period. An insight showing how fundamental this transition really was is gained when the settlement patterns of the Roman period and the Middle Ages are brought into the picture.[73] Throughout the Early and Middle Roman period, until ca. 250 AD, settlements (and presumably also the core of the arable complexes) were practically all located within the loamier zones of the landscape (fig. 5.9). This was followed by a period of large-scale abandonment lasting several centuries. When the MDS region was recolonised in the Early Middle Ages, settlements were founded once again in precisely those parts of the landscape where habitation had been concentrated from the later Iron Age onwards. Broadly speaking, the less fertile sandier zones which had been principle areas of habitation in the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age and had been abandoned at the end of the Early Iron Age were not reclaimed for cultivation until the 19th century AD.

The long-term effects of this transformation suggest that it had underlying causes that were compelling as well as irreversible. What were these causes, that were to have an impact on settlement patterns for the next two millennia? At this point, I wish to present a model that sees human-induced soil degradation as a major factor. It is a model in the sense that it is in some respects hypothetical and undoubtedly oversimplifies complex intra-regional and temporal variations. But more importantly, while this model looks at causal relationships between environmental conditions and settlement patterns, it does not claim to *explain* why the transformation in the settlement patterns took place in the way it did. To do that would entail explaining why alternative reactions to secondary podzolisation and its effects were *not* chosen. In the last instance, the archaeological patterns which point to such a transformation are the combined results of historically specific perceptions, decisions and events. Therefore, instead of being an ecologically determinative model, what I present here is intended as a means of revealing the changing parameters for habitation of the sandy plateaus of the MDS region. The specific cultural and social trajectories of change that took place in conjunction with the transformation of settlement patterns will be further investigated in the synthesis.

In short, the hypothesis that I propose here runs as follows. The combination of high population densities of the Urnfield period, the celtic field system, as well as previous and ongoing forest clearance led to accelerated rates of podzolisation of the loam-poor sand plateaus. This resulted in the spread of wastelands with a heather and degraded forest vegetation on soils that could no longer be used for cultivation, and ultimately led to the abandonment of those wastelands.[74] In many ways, this model is similar to - and inspired by - the one proposed by Theo Spek for the landscapes of Drenthe.[75] The settlement record of the MDS region, in which the habitation of the *essen* zones has become well known in recent decades, allows for a further evaluation and substantiation of the model from a perspective that is presently unavailable in the northern Netherlands or northwestern Germany. There are several elements to this hypothesis that need to be reviewed separately.

[73] Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

[74] See also Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

[75] Spek 1993; idem 1996.

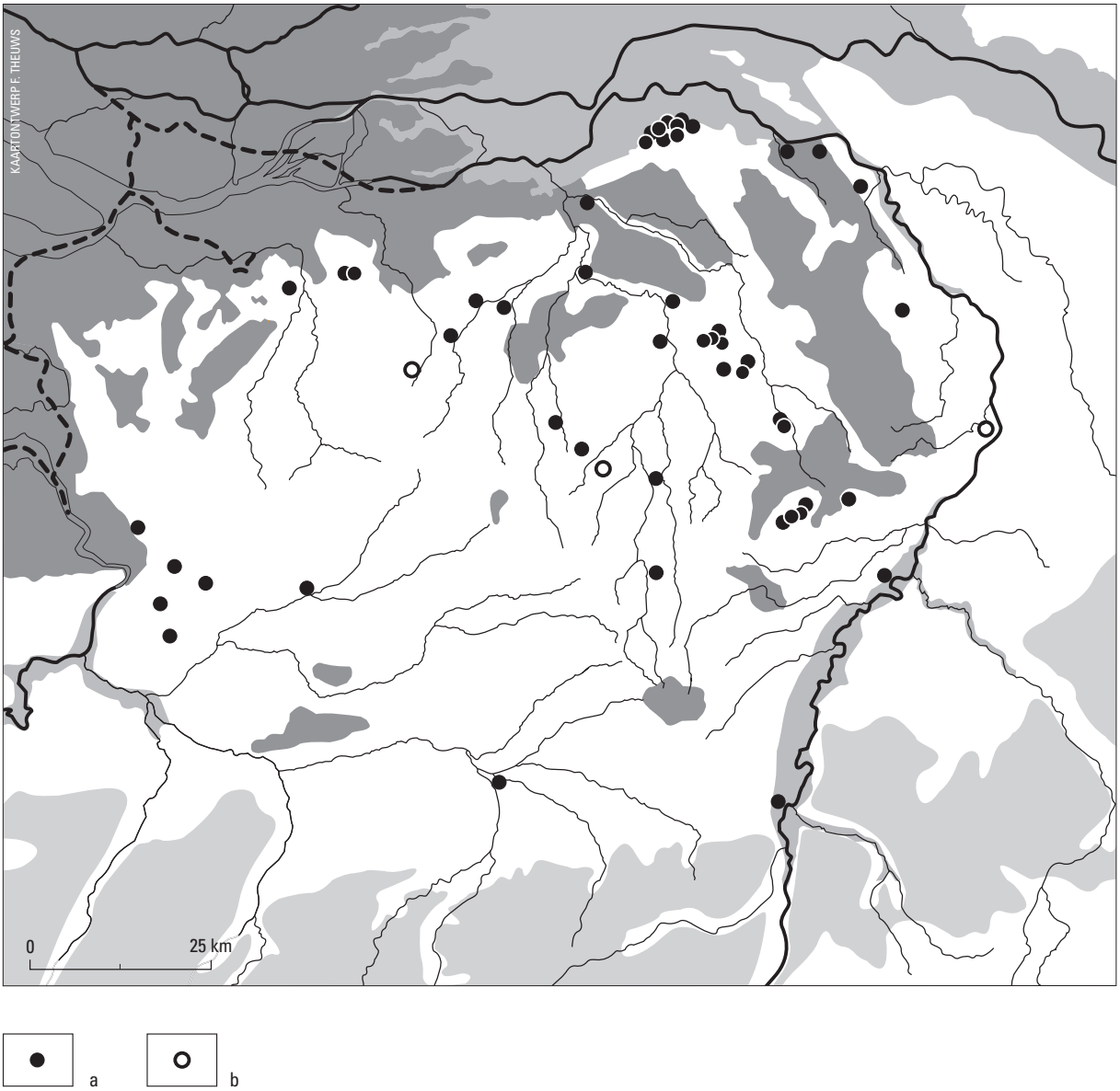

Fig. 5.9 Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region. Distribution of (partially) excavated Roman-period rural settlements. a) settlement discovered in old arable complex; b) settlement discovered in premodern heathland. After Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

As described in the introduction to this chapter, primary podzolisation of sandy soils in a temperate climate with a precipitation surplus takes place on soils with a loam contents below ca. 10 percent, regardless of the vegetation.[76] Such conditions had been present since the early Holocene, and one can assume that podzols had developed in those sandiest soils by the beginning of the first millennium BC. More critical for my model is the degree to which secondary podzolisation had occurred and was still taking place in the Urnfield period. The term secondary podzolisation refers to the degradation of soils that form podzols only under adverse hydrological and vegetational conditions. These are soils with loam percentages between ca. 10 and 20-25 percent, and they make up the majority of the drier coversand areas of the MDS region.[77] A major factor determining podzolisation in this intermediate category is the

[76] Spek 1993, 174-177.

[77] These critical transition zones in loam percentages are valid for relatively dry soils (in Dutch terminology: *grondwatertrap* VI, VII, or VIII) (Spek 1993, 175).

humus supply, and therefore the vegetation.[78] Secondary podzolisation did not occur under deciduous forests like those that developed after the last Ice Age, and it was not until the forest was cleared by humans from the Middle Neolithic onwards that processes of secondary podzolisation began.[79] Contributing to the podzolisation processes, moreover, were changes in the groundwater table as a result of the removal of the forest vegetation. Typical for the resulting humus podzols is an acid heather vegetation.

Palynological investigations of Late Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows in the MDS region as well as in other sandy landscapes of the Northwest European Plain have indicated that gradual heathland expansion linked to podzolisation processes took place from the Bronze Age onwards.[80] One indication for this comes from the frequently made observation that Bronze Age barrows, in contrast to Late Neolithic ones, were always made of heath sods of podzolised soils. During the Early and Middle Bronze Age, forest regeneration appears to have occurred where shifting cultivation made this possible, and heathland areas probably remained limited in size.[81] There is some debate about the question whether mature forests could still regenerate on the sandier soils during the Urnfield period. While some hold that forest regeneration took place under all circumstances where humans no longer intervened,[82] others contend that after several phases of forest clearance and cultivation, a more open and permanent heather vegetation with some oak and birch remained on podzolised soil.[83] Palynological evidence from urnfields of the Late Bronze Age in the MDS region indicates that those were situated in open but still lightly forested terrain.[84] The landscape around the Weert-Boshoverheide urnfield which dates to the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age became increasingly open during the period of use of the cemetery. In the final stages, the urnfield was situated in a largely open heathland.[85] It is impossible to extrapolate a handful of pollen studies into a reconstruction of the biotic landscape, but to the extent that pollen studies are available, they fit a model of a gradually more open landscape in the sandier areas during the Urnfield period.[86]

A second hypothetical element is the question whether there was an actual acceleration in the rate of soil degradation during the Urnfield period. This is assumed to be the case, as a consequence of forest clearance on the one hand, and the combination of the celtic field system and growing population densities on the other. As Spek describes, cutting down the forest on the sandier soils would have resulted in an increase in water flowing downward through the soil as precipitation was no longer intercepted and evaporated by the forest vegetation.[87] This would have increased rates of mineral eluviation from the Bronze Age onwards. During the Urnfield period an added factor was the cultivation system. A case was made in the previous chapter to view the celtic field system as an extensive and dynamic system. Manuring may have restricted the loss of soil fertility in the short run.[88] But in the long run, the sustainability of the agricultural system depended on the possibility of expanding the celtic field complex, to shift cultivation to previously uncultivated or completely regenerated land and to leave fallow or permanently abandon exhausted fields. The fact that celtic fields grew to such large complexes cannot be explained otherwise.

78 Breeuwsma/De Bakker 1990.

79 Edelman 1963; Spek 1993, 177.

80 Waterbolk 1954b; Groenman-van Waateringe 1977; Casparie/Groenman-van Waateringe 1980.

81 Behre 2000, 147, fig. 12.

82 Behre 2000, 146-149.

83 Waterbolk 1954b, 117; Groenman-van Waateringe 1977, 44; Spek 1993, 191.

84 Bakels 1975, 48-49. In her study are included Hilvarenbeek-Laag Spul (nr. 159), Veldhoven-Heibloem (nr. 242), and Toterfout-Halve Mijl (nr. 239). De Kort 2002, for a reconstruction around the urnfield with the chiefly barrow at Oss (nr. 179).

85 Groenman-van Waateringe 1988, 148-149.

86 Spek 1993, 194.

87 Spek 1993, 191.

88 Behre 2000, 138-139, 142; De Hingh 2000.

The continuous need for expansion is where the local communities in the Early Iron Age may have encountered problems. In the finely differentiated landscape of sandy and loamy soils, and wet and dry areas, it would have become increasingly difficult to reclaim land of prime quality. Potentially arable zones were restricted in size, but more importantly, most or all of the inhabitable zones had been settled in the course of the Urnfield period. Local communities were surrounded by neighbouring communities, perhaps equally looking to find new arable land. The result was that the possibility of countering the loss of soil fertility with a long period of fallow became restricted. In the loamy zones, this was less of a problem than in the sandy areas. In the latter, cultivation could easily have accelerated secondary podzol formation, as well as have triggered changes in the micro-climate, including desiccation of the fields.[89] The heathlands that developed on and around the abandoned fields probably remained open, as they were exploited for grazing cattle and sheep. Forest regeneration would therefore not have had a fair chance, and if it did occur, the podzolised soils would not have supported the same kind of dense forest that grew there before the Bronze Age.

Admittedly, neither progressing heathland expansion and accelerated soil degradation are evidence that it was precisely at the end of the Early Iron Age and the beginning of the Middle Iron Age that a critical threshold was crossed after which habitation of the sandy areas had to be given up. But this is where the settlement record provides evidence that is not otherwise available, in the form of a major transformation of habitation patterns. Even though I risk introducing a circular argument here, I think it is reasonable to assume that soil degradation led to irreversible problems in the sandy areas at the end of the Urnfield period or in the course of the Middle Iron Age.

Possible connections between environmental degradation during the Iron Age and local, intra-regional and inter-regional migration have been pointed out for other areas of the Northwest European Plain as well. Most recently, Van Geel, Buurman and Waterbolk have argued that an abrupt increase in the atmosphere's delta ^{14}C around 2700 BP (ca. 800 cal BC) coincided with a rather sudden change in Northwestern Europe from a continental to an oceanic climate, leading in some areas to raised groundwater tables and peat growth.[90] The authors propose a relationship between this climatic change and archaeological indications of regional abandonment and migration in parts of the Netherlands and beyond. There are no reasons to assume, however, that this phenomenon is related to the Middle Iron Age changes in the habitation patterns in the MDS region: it occurred several centuries earlier, and there are no indications that peat growth greatly diminished the potentially arable areas of the coversand landscape of the MDS region.

In an earlier article, Waterbolk and Van Gijn discussed the Iron Age colonisation of the salt marshes in the northern Netherlands and the possible environmental incentives to emigrate that may have occurred in the region of origin of the colonists, the Drenthe coversand plateau.[91] During an early phase of the Middle Iron Age the salt marshes became permanently settled within a relatively short time span. The authors discuss several possible causes, including the frequent occurrence of sand drifts during the Late Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age, peat formation from the Early Iron Age onwards, soil exhaustion and overpopulation. While they see each of these factors as contributing to an increasing shortage of arable land, they contend that each took place gradually over a considerable time period, and would not have led to a crisis resulting in forced emigration. Rather, the exploitation of the salt marshes came about, in a transhumant mode at first, as one of the strategies employed to deal with the growing competition for land between agricultural and pastoral components of the food economy. Their model thus contains some of the same elements as the model suggested here for the MDS region. Alongside high population levels and soil exhaustion, the occurrence of sand drifts of Urnfield-period date has been demonstrated

89 Spek 1993, 194-195.

90 Van Geel/Buurman/Waterbolk 1996; idem 1997.

91 Van Gijn/Waterbolk 1984.

in the direct vicinity of the urnfield of Weert-Boshoverheide.[92] The extent to which sand drifts were a supra-local problem is hard to establish, but their presence forms an additional indication that there were structural imbalances between the agricultural system and the regenerative capacity of soil and vegetation. While Van Gijn and Waterbolk primarily think of inter-regional migration for the northern Netherlands, the evidence from the MDS region points mainly to intra-regional and local migration. For the time being, the question remains open as to whether the increase in population in the Holocene river landscape in the Middle Iron Age is related to the developments in the MDS region.

A final paper on environmental degradation in the Iron Age that should be discussed is by Behre.[93] He addresses the question of the effects of prehistoric and early historic agricultural systems on the coversand landscape of northwest Germany. In his view, the banks between the fields of one group of celtic fields, including Vaassen and Flögeln, were erected with the purpose of growing crops on them.[94] Only in the 'Pre Celtic Field' or 'Early Celtic Field' phase did cultivation take place in the fields themselves. From about 500 BC onwards,[95] the fields functioned primarily as a source of humus and mineral fertiliser for the cultivated banks. Organic and mineral fertiliser was also brought in from the outside, in the form of sods, animal dung and settlement refuse, and according to Behre manuring was one of the key elements of the celtic field system.[96] Heathlands of restricted size developed in the vicinity of the settlements as a result of the demand for arable land and humus-rich sods for manuring, but these disappeared again after the settlement was abandoned.[97] The truly extensive heathland areas did not develop until the Late Middle Ages and later, when sod manuring was practised on a much larger scale than in prehistoric times.

Although Behre makes a distinction between richer brown forest soils (*Parabraunerde*) and poorer podzolised soils, he does not take into account the process of soil degeneration as a result of secondary podzol formation on the sandier soils. He may therefore be overly optimistic about the capacity for forest regeneration on the coversand plateaus after a long phase of celtic field agriculture. If Behre is correct in his reconstruction of the celtic field system on the poorer soils in which the banks were the main areas of cultivation and were continuously enriched, soil degradation may not have been a great problem on the banks themselves. In places where the humus-rich topsoil was removed, however, secondary podzolisation would have accelerated, and irreversible soil degradation may therefore have had its negative effects already by the Early or Middle Iron Age. Alternatively, as was argued in the previous chapter (section 4.4), the shift from cultivating the fields to cultivating the banks may not have taken place until a final stage of the use of celtic fields, as a strategy to counter the imminent loss of arable land due to soil degradation. The initial formation of the banks themselves must have taken place earlier on in the development of the celtic fields, as it is hard to understand the particular grid-like layout of the banks as the most suitable form for cultivating them with an ard. Moreover, when the evidence for changing settlement patterns from Drenthe and the MDS region is incorporated – remains of farmsteads contemporaneous with the celtic field being absent at Flögeln – the permanent degradation of the sandier parts of

92 Van Mourik 1988.

93 Behre 2000.

94 Behre 2000, 140. In another group of celtic fields that Behre distinguishes, the banks were too narrow or comprised too many rocks to have been erected with the purpose of cultivating them.

95 Behre 2000, 136.

96 Behre 2000, 142.

97 Behre 2000, 147. The example of forest recovery after a phase of clearance and heathland expansion that Behre cites, however, dates to the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. It is unclear whether by the Iron Age sandy soils were still rich enough in minerals to allow full forest recovery, or whether secondary podzol formation had advanced by then to such an extent that heathland vegetation remained, perhaps with a degraded forest cover. The investigations at the Noordse Veld at Zeijen indicate that there the pre-celtic field landscape was already semi-open to open with grasses and shrubs, even though there are no indicators in the pollen for nearby agricultural activities (Spek et al. in press).

the landscape as early as the Early and Middle Iron Age becomes all the more likely. This is not to argue that the heathlands of the 18th and 19th centuries AD directly originated in prehistoric times, but that the agricultural potential of the sandier areas had been greatly and permanently reduced by the mid-first millennium BC.

5.4.2 CHANGING AGRICULTURAL REGIMES IN THE LATER PART OF THE IRON AGE

The environmental model presented above provides several leads to rethink the problem of the final stages of the celtic field system and the agricultural system that replaced it. In section 4.4.4 a relationship between the appearance of stable farmstead patterns during the second half of the last millennium BC and the development of a new agricultural system was hinted at. The hypothesis that many of the celtic fields and also the celtic field system itself were given up in the MDS region in the course of the Middle Iron Age can be further substantiated by the data presented in this chapter on the long-term shifts in the regional and micro-regional habitation patterns and the presumed connection with soil degradation processes.

Celtic fields in the sandier parts of the landscape, where secondary podzolisation would have advanced relatively fast, were probably given up in those settlement territories that were abandoned at the end of the Urnfield period. The question is whether land use practices remained the same in those loamier parts of the landscape where habitation continued, or whether structural changes took place. A major problem in answering this question is that traces of celtic fields have only rarely been encountered to date under the *essen*. This is in itself not surprising: celtic field banks would have been levelled during centuries of Roman-period and medieval cultivation. Nevertheless, fragments of two celtic fields in *essen* zones in the Odoorn region in Drenthe have been observed recently.[98] They did not show up on the aerial photographs available to Brongers in the 1970s, but erosion of the *plaggen* soils that covered them brought the celtic fields to the surface again as soil marks. No further investigations have been carried out, but they represent an indication that celtic fields with banks between the fields were an element of both the sandier and loamier parts of the landscape. Indirect, but much more extensive, evidence for the cultivation of the loamier zones of the landscape comes from the settlement evidence. This means that farmstead and settlement patterns provide the best information at present. In this respect there are two indications that point to a change in the agricultural system.

Firstly, the development of stable farmsteads from the Middle Iron Age onwards means that the relationship changed between the house construction and abandonment cycles on the one hand and the agricultural cycles of cultivation and long-term fallow on the other. Especially with the slightly later appearance of nucleated settlements, the pattern of farmsteads that periodically shifted within a celtic field complex in accordance with the periodic abandonment of nearby fields was no longer the norm.

Secondly, seen from a micro-regional perspective, the areas where habitation and cultivation took place from the later part of the last millennium BC onwards were considerably smaller than the inhabited landscapes of the Urnfield period. All four investigated micro-regions present a picture of densely populated habitation 'islands' in the loamier parts of the landscape, separated by wastelands which were not used for habitation or cultivation. This picture does not appear fully until the Roman period, but its roots go back to the Middle Iron Age. In these habitation zones, the celtic field system may well have continued throughout the later part of the Iron Age – the soils there not being as prone to degradation as in the abandoned regions. However, it is hard to see how the specific agricultural system of the

[98] Jager 1993, 18, 41-44.

Urnfield period – which depended on dynamic use of the land and periodic expansion into previously uncultivated areas – could have been maintained under the new conditions. In those areas where there were clusters of settlements, Roman-period Oss, Someren, Weert, and Mierlo-Hout being prime examples, there would simply not have been the space for a very dynamic agricultural system (see figs. 5.4-5.7). Therefore, even though there is little direct evidence from field systems or botanical remains, the settlement evidence strongly suggests that the celtic field system was replaced by a system much more fixed in space. Fallow periods were always necessary of course, but the long abandonment phases of fields must have decreased markedly.

The timing of the introduction of a new agricultural system undoubtedly varied from area to area. In less densely populated regions there would have been little incentive to begin using the arable land in a different manner as long as long-term fallow systems could be maintained. The extensive celtic field system may have continued there into the Roman period, possibly as an addition to more permanent fields, and possibly by cultivating the banks rather than the fields. In general, however, the local as well as micro-regional settlement patterns suggest that the celtic field system was gradually replaced by a more permanent system from the Middle Iron Age onwards, and that this new system was firmly established by the beginning of the Roman period.

Even though the loamier zones where habitation continued after the Urnfield period were comparatively fertile, the success of a system of permanent fields with fallow in the sandy landscapes of the Northwest European Plain depended to a large measure on the amount of fertiliser that could be brought into the system. Until the introduction of artificial fertiliser in the 19th century AD, the most important restriction on agricultural expansion or intensification came from the amount of organic manure that could be produced.[99] The importance of animal manure in the Roman period can be deduced from the appearance of sunken byres in the farmhouses. By analogy with the system of manure production in sub-recent byre-houses, the sunken byre is generally thought to have been designed for the collection of dung, probably mixed with heath sods, during the winter months when the cattle were kept indoors.[100]

5.5 CONCLUSIONS

The main results of the research presented in this chapter are threefold. Firstly, an analysis of the specific habitation histories of four selected micro-regions demonstrated considerable demographic variability both in space and time. Relatively low population densities in the Middle Bronze Age were followed by a powerful demographic expansion during the Urnfield period. This occurred in most or all of the inhabitable landscapes throughout the MDS region. Demographic patterns changed again fundamentally at the end of the Urnfield period. It is clear that within the MDS region more intra-regional differentiation in population densities existed than before, and it is likely that the overall population decreased. Areas such as the Maaskant around the town of Oss and the riverine zones to the north appear to have been populated as densely as before or even more densely. In contrast, the population appears to have decreased significantly in the interior parts of the MDS region. During the Late Iron Age and especially the Early Roman period, population numbers appear to have increased again dramatically throughout the MDS region.

[99] Crijns/Kriellaars 1987; idem 1996.

[100] Roymans 1996b, 78; Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

Secondly, the same micro-regional analyses showed several major changes in the settlement patterns over the course of the last millennium BC. In the Middle Bronze Age, small groups of wandering farmsteads occurred in the two main zones of the coversand landscape, the sandier as well as loamier plateaus. Settlement territories appear to have been distributed in a diffuse, open pattern over the landscape. During the Urnfield period, again the sandier as well as the loamier soils were used for habitation and cultivation, but now settlement territories occurred in much denser distributions over the inhabitable landscape. Especially by the Early Iron Age, at a phase showing a demographic peak, there would have been little land unclaimed by local communities. Even though absolute population densities were low in comparison to the High Middle Ages and later, the whole landscape was settled and filled up. The end of the Urnfield period coincided with the beginning of a phase in which settlement patterns changed fundamentally. From then on, during the Middle and Late Iron Age and equally during the next phase of demographic expansion in the Early Roman period, habitation and cultivation areas were restricted to the loamier zones of the landscape. The sandier plateaus were wastelands by this time, economically important for grazing cattle and sheep, but no longer used structurally for crop cultivation. Because of the nature of the archaeological record of the Middle and Late Iron Age this new settlement pattern does not appear clearly in the data until the Roman period, but there are good indications to assume that it had its origins as early as the Middle Iron Age. By the Roman period, the loamy parts of the landscape throughout the MDS region were settled quite densely by small, nucleated settlements. The arable lands were presumably situated around the settlements, and were cultivated using a more permanent and intensive system than in the celtic fields of the Urnfield period. Manuring became a key element of the agricultural system.

Thirdly, the changes in settlement patterns during the middle of the first millennium BC were probably connected to a phase of environmental degradation that had been originally triggered by forest removal and was seriously accelerated by the celtic field system. Sustained changes in the vegetation cover, the humus supply and the hydrological conditions of the soil led to secondary podzol formation, especially on soils with loam contents between 10 and 25%. During the Early and Middle Bronze Age forest regeneration on these soils was still possible when farmsteads and fields changed location. In contrast, progressing soil degradation during the Urnfield period negatively affected the cultivable areas, while increasing population densities made it necessary to expand into previously uncultivated areas at higher rates. This combination prevented forest recovery, further accelerated soil degradation, and in the long run made the sandier plateaus increasingly unsuitable for cultivation. The concentration of settlement territories in the loamier zones of the landscape, as well as the development of a more intensive and permanent agricultural system can be seen as specific cultural strategies to deal with the loss of arable land.

6 Landscape, identity and community in the first millennium BC

In this chapter I wish to return to the main themes that have been explored in this study: landscape, the construction of local social identities, and the distribution and representation of claims to land. In several ways it is intended as a synthesis. In the preceding chapters, an analytical separation was made between several social levels and between spatial scales. The house and household were treated in relative isolation from the local community and settlement territory, and local communities were not viewed in relation to each other until the chapter on micro-regional habitation and land use patterns. It could be argued that these distinctions were to some extent also meaningful in the past, as different social groups were shown to define themselves through different means and on different geographical scales. The aim of this chapter, however, is to focus on the interaction between social levels and their differentiated relationships with land and landscape.

Another artificial separation was made between social and cultural dimensions on the one hand and ecological and economic possibilities and constraints on the other. While chapters 3 and 4 placed a stronger emphasis on the former, the focus in chapter 5 was mostly on subsistence economy, demographic trends and ecological change. This has been a useful analytical distinction for the sake of argumentation and clarity, but it has little to do with real life. In the introduction I argued for a theoretical perspective that is sufficiently sensitive to the need to look at how people in the past actively interpreted and ordered the world around them, but that does not disregard the influence that ecological stimuli may have had in instigating social and cultural change. Up to this point in this study I have made few systematic attempts at combining them. While not claiming to overcome dichotomies between material and ideological or between nature and culture, I will attempt in this synthesis to identify the interplay between the different dimensions of human interaction with the landscape.

In order to keep this synthesis to a manageable size, I will largely work from the interpretations and conclusions reached earlier, without repeating in full the arguments that underlie them. Where appropriate, I refer to the relevant sections in the preceding chapters.

6.1 Flexible patterns of social identity and land tenure in a Middle Bronze Age barrow landscape

Population densities in the Middle Bronze Age were regionally differentiated but were generally low. Farmsteads consisting of a single-phase byre-house with small outbuildings were the elements of widely dispersed habitation patterns. Both the loamier and sandier plateaus of the landscape were inhabited. Even though there is some evidence that primary and secondary podzolisation resulted locally in soil degradation, this does not appear to have advanced to such a degree that the regenerative capacity of the natural vegetation suffered greatly.

In this situation of low population densities and easy availability of cultivable land, there was little need, from theviewpoint of land use practices, to develop a highly structured territorial organisation. The

relatively high degree of residential mobility – farmsteads rarely remained in a single location for the duration of more than one building phase or household generation – supports a picture of dynamic patterns of land use and tenure. When a cultivated plot became depleted of soil nutrients, suitable farming land that was not yet claimed could easily be found. The arable lands of individual farmsteads and local communities were situated amidst much larger areas that were probably used extensively for animal husbandry (grazing, fodder cutting) and as a source of fuel and construction materials. Family groups – even though they would have had a considerable degree of autonomy with regard to the management of the land – did not form long-standing bonds with the locations they inhabited and cultivated.[1] In comparison with the later Urnfield period, it is therefore likely that the territorial organisation of the landscape was rather loosely defined and subject to a considerable degree of change. The rights of access and use of arable fields may have been invested in individual families for the duration of their occupation and use of the land, while rights to more extensively exploited landscape zones may well have been shared by different groups.

Isolated barrows and barrow groups in which a small percentage of the population was interred formed permanent features of the landscape. The fact that they were frequently used for burial again in later times indicates that they held cultural meanings relating to the dead and to ancestors; they were constitutive elements of the mythical geography of the landscape. Two different kinds of reuse should be distinguished: interment in the peripheral parts of an existing mound, and the erection of a new mound on top of an existing one (a new 'mound period'), thus beginning a new phase of primary and possibly secondary interments. The former practice was presumably related to a relatively short phase of years or a generation after the burial of the primary grave, and perhaps concerned descendants of the person buried there. There are indications that new mound phases were separated from the initial construction of the barrow by decades or centuries (4.2.2).[2] In the course of the Middle Bronze Age there was an increased frequency of both new barrow construction and barrow reuse phases. These changes are generally seen as being connected with an increase in the percentage of the population that was buried under or in a barrow.[3] Another feature associated with the second half of the Middle Bronze Age is the formation of barrow groups. In contrast to the dense urnfields, barrow groups consist of small numbers of widely spaced mounds. The increasing numbers of barrow locations led in the course of the Middle Bronze Age to the formation of 'barrow landscapes'.[4] Funerary monuments would have been important elements in the creation and reproduction of social groups, being the most monumental and permanent of man-made features in the landscape. For descendants of persons buried in a barrow, the monument would have created a sense of identity and belonging.

The loose territorial organisation of the landscape implies that local communities were not defined in the same strict manner as they were in the Urnfield period (see below). As was argued in chapter 4, social groups define themselves in part through constant and dynamic processes of interaction with the landscape. In the particular Middle Bronze Age constellation of dynamic land use practices, high residential mobility and limited continuity in the choice of barrow locations, kinship and other social relationships may well have been open and fluid. Some authors have argued that the Middle Bronze Age barrow landscape expressed the ideology of a dominant kinship structure.[5] But in contrast to the Urnfield period, the relationships between social groups and funerary monuments would have been less fixed, given the frequency with which and distances over which groups periodically relocated their dwelling

1 Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 50-53.

2 Lohof 1991, 225-226; Theunissen 1999, 72, 103. In the course of the Middle Bronze Age, 'mound periods' probably followed each other with increasingly short intervals.

3 Theunissen 1999, 85-86; Lohof 1991, 249-255.

4 Cf. Fontijn 1996, 78.

5 Lohof 1994; Fontijn 1996, 78; Fokkens 1997a.

places. In the cases where a barrow was reused after a period of multiple generations, it is unlikely that direct genealogical lines were still traced to the original ancestor. It is probable that constructing a mound over a much older monument was meant to recreate ties with a mythical past and the associated ancestors. This suggests that ancestors and lines of descent could be appropriated.

In sum, the definition of local groups may have been based as much on principles of cross-generational continuity as on concrete and changing distributions of residential groups over the landscape. Perhaps, individual and collective identities as well as certain land use rights were based partly on places of origin that were embedded in the barrow landscape and its mythical geography. At the same time, the actual patterns of residence and the social relationships based on locality gave temporary rights of access to and use of the land to families and local groups. This would have made local communities in the Middle Bronze Age open and flexible, and their relationships with particular places and areas in the landscape relatively loose.

6.2 THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE TO LATE BRONZE AGE TRANSITION AND THE GENESIS OF URNFIELDS

6.2.1 AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, ELITE COMPETITION AND DEMOGRAPHY IN MACRO-REGIONAL AND REGIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

The genesis of the 'Urnfield Culture' and its diffusion over considerable parts of Central and Western Europe have occupied archaeologists for quite some time. Since the growing realisation that there is a great deal of regional variation in the cultural traditions associated with the Urnfield period, many have shied away from trying to understand the developments from a macro-regional perspective and have focused instead on regionally specific developments.[6] The Urnfield period in the Lower Rhine Basin presents a case in point; since the definition of the cultural assemblage of the *Niederrheinische Grabhügelkultur* (NGK) by Kersten in 1948 it has been common to stress the regionally specific character and strong continuity of local Bronze Age traditions.[7] Most authors do not consider the NGK to be part of the Urnfield Culture, although in a general sense there are clear correspondences in the burial ritual. There are also specific material categories (*Kerbschnitt* ware, bronze sword types) that indicate that the Lower Rhine Basin was not culturally isolated from other parts of Europe. This means that macro-regional scales of analysis cannot be rejected out of hand. In this section, I will discuss several recent macro-regional and regional models and their usefulness for understanding the genesis of urnfields in the MDS region.

In the well-known model developed by Champion to explain the rise of European Urnfield traditions during the Late Bronze Age, important causal powers are awarded to a phase of climatic deterioration, sea-level rise and peat expansion.[8] This led to a decrease in the available arable land and an agricultural crisis. In the particular competitive social constellation of the later second millennium BC, the resulting agricultural intensification and elite control over the production and distribution of subsistence goods offered elite groups opportunities for engaging in status competition. The adoption of Urnfield

[6] E.g. Brun/Mordant 1988; Ruppel 1990; idem 1995.

[7] Kersten 1948; Desittere 1968; Verwers 1969; Kimmig 1970; idem 1982; Roymans 1991, 14.

[8] Champion et al. 1984, 291-293.

burial rites and its symbolism function as an element in the promotion and justification of new authority structures.

More recently, Kristiansen has also addressed this issue in his *Europe before history*.[9] He considers the spread of Urnfield cultural traditions across Central, northern and Atlantic Europe as being closely connected to the expansion of long-distance exchange networks of metalwork, prompted by elite demands for prestige goods. In his model, the urnfield cemeteries were an expression of the strong ritual and social identity of farming groups, which became socially distinct from elite groups.[10] During the period between 1100 and 750 BC, that is in the centuries following the spread of the Urnfield traditions, many regions witnessed a combination of population growth, agricultural intensification and social and political hierarchisation.[11]

Champion's and Kristiansen's models clearly emphasise different aspects of the macro-regional processes at the end of the second millennium BC, but neither viewpoint appears to be of great value for understanding the specific transformations that occurred in the MDS region at the end of the second millennium BC.[12] Most importantly, there is no empirical basis for assuming a significant role for elite groups in the transformation of agricultural practices and burial customs. There are no fortified settlements or central places involved in specialised production as in other parts of Europe. Even though it could be argued that land became a critical resource (but see below), there are no indications for control over land and subsistence resources by specific hierarchically ordered social groups. Cemeteries are generally poor in grave goods, and the few rich graves of the Hallstatt C period are incorporated within larger urnfields; there is no spatial segregation between commoner and elite graves. Access to long-distance exchange networks appears to have been a more important arena for elite competition in the Middle and Late Bronze Age than agricultural production.[13] But while this suggests a mechanism for cultural interaction and the dissemination of ideas from other parts of Europe, it does not offer an understanding of why Urnfield-Culture burial customs arose out of the local barrow ritual in the MDS region.

A critical stance on pan-European models has also been voiced recently by Fokkens.[14] In his view, the genesis of urnfields in the Lower Rhine Basin (which includes the MDS region) has to be understood as the effect of ideological changes and the expansion of gift exchange networks. I will return to this in the following section.

Roymans and Kortlang have recently presented a model that describes the genesis of urnfields as an outcome of largely internal processes.[15] They argue that the driving forces behind the societal transformations in the Late Bronze Age MDS region were a continuous demographic expansion and a resulting pressure on land. This is connected to increasing competition between local groups for control over land, decreasing sizes of settlement territories and the introduction of celtic field agriculture. An important difference from the models of Champion and Kristiansen is that it does not include the notion of elite competition regarding the production and control of agricultural surplus. The urnfield forms a focus for the memory and identity of a local group and symbolises the age-old presence of that group in the territory. Claims to the land are expressed in an idiom of ancestors; prime significance of the Urnfield mortuary ritual and symbolism therefore lies in the territorial-marker function of the cemeteries. In the particular situation of the Lower Rhine Basin, this model is more appealing than one that emphasises the importance of exchange networks of prestige goods. This is not only because the significance of elite control over land is unattested, but also because it fits in well with the evidence suggesting that the

9 Kristiansen 1998.

10 Kristiansen 1998, 113, 122.

11 Kristiansen 1998, 98-103.

12 It should be noted in Kristiansen's defence that judging from his maps on which the Low Countries are blank zones (e.g. 1998, fig. 26), he does not claim to make statements valid for the study area.

13 Roymans 1991.

14 Fokkens 1997a.

15 Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 36-40.

Urnfield-period mortuary ritual was primarily a transformation of existing indigenous Middle Bronze Age traditions. Clearly, Roymans and Kortlang's model has many points that overlap with the ideas presented in chapter 4 and in 6.4 below on the relationship between local communities, urnfields and land.

However, as a model that aims to understand the genesis of urnfields – rather than a situation following the emergence of Urnfield-period burial practices - it is not without its problems. To my mind there is reason to doubt the presumed pressure caused by increasing population levels. For it to be a convincing candidate as a force underlying socio-cultural change, one would need to demonstrate that population pressure was an issue before or at the time when the changes occurred. This is not as clear-cut for the Late Bronze Age as Roymans and Kortlang suggest.[16] The gradual increase in the number of barrow groups and urnfields from the Middle Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age is quite likely to have been connected with increasing population levels. But what concrete indications are there for *pressure* on the land during the Late Bronze Age, or better still, before the first appearance of urnfields? As Roymans and Kortlang themselves mention, a large percentage of the urnfields were founded in the Early Iron Age.[17] It is in that period that the most powerful demographic expansion took place, several centuries after urnfields first appeared. The micro-regional settlement evidence does not point to filled-up landscapes before the Early Iron Age, which makes a case for population pressure tenuous. An absence of pressure on the available cultivable land suggests that a desire for greater territorial control by local groups cannot offer more than a partial understanding of the genesis of urnfields.

6.2.2 THE MYTHICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE LANDSCAPE AND THE FORMATION OF STABLE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The notion that the Urnfield period burial ritual developed out of indigenous Middle Bronze Age mortuary practices becomes clear when the two periods are compared. Different aspects of the burial rituals changed in different ways and at different tempos, but most of the elements of the Urnfield ritual had their roots earlier in the Bronze Age (4.2.2, 4.2.5).[18] Cremation became the dominant form of treating the body. This practice began much earlier and gradually increased throughout the Middle Bronze Age.[19] Collecting the cremated remains in ceramic vessels was also introduced long before the Late Bronze Age. A second aspect of change concerns the percentage of the population that was buried. This increased from an estimated 15% in the Middle Bronze Age to the great majority of the population in the Urnfield period.[20] Thirdly, there was a large decrease in the locations that were selected for burial. Barrows dating to the Middle Bronze Age usually occur as isolated features or in small, dispersed barrow groups. In the course of the second half of the Middle Bronze Age barrow groups became more frequent, but the number of isolated barrows increased as well. This indicates that the places in the landscape considered suitable for burying the dead were not fixed by long-standing tradition and that existing barrows determined only to a limited extent the choice of location. With the genesis of urnfields, this changed fundamentally. One of the most conspicuous characteristics of urnfields is the fact that the same place was selected again and again for burying the dead, leading over time to dense clusters of graves.

16 Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 38-39, fig. 2.

17 Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 38: *Relying on the urnfield evidence, it can be argued that more than half of the local communities were founded in the course of the Early Iron Age.*

18 Verwers 1969; Fontijn 1996; Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 36-37.

19 Theunissen 1999, 84. In the second half of the Middle Bronze Age around 80% of the graves were cremation graves, while in the Late Bronze Age there were no longer any inhumation graves.

20 Theunissen 1999, 85-86.

In the debate about the genesis of spatially-fixed urnfields little attention has been paid to date to the cultural dimensions that may have been involved. However, by combining evidence for the transformation of burial rituals with that for changing habitation patterns, it is possible to explore those dimensions. The resulting model focuses on transformations in the relationships between social identity and landscape from the Middle Bronze Age to the Urnfield period. It approaches the problem from a different perspective than Roymans' and Kortlang's model, and places more emphasis on long-term processes and *mentalités* than on the developments directly before and during the Middle to Late Bronze Age transition.

As argued in the previous section, practices of social reproduction before the Urnfield period were grounded in unstable patterns of land use. The periodic relocation of farmsteads as well as the lack of stability of burial locations were important aspects of this, and had been so since at least the Late Neolithic. Social identity, I suggested, was based as much on differentiated relationships with ancestors represented by the barrow landscape, as on the more dynamic social relationships that came about through patterns of residence. But the barrow landscape and its associated mythical geography were themselves not static. From the construction of the first barrow in the Late Neolithic onwards, a process had begun that can be described as the gradual creation of a historical or mythical landscape. Barrows were not erected with great frequency, perhaps only once per generation, but once in existence they were permanent. Over time their numbers and densities only increased. Their societal meanings probably changed, their precise genealogical associations would have been forgotten and recreated, but they remained permanent markers of the history of habitation and ancestral presence in the area. The landscape thus gradually became more structured by a mythical geography of which the ancient and more recent funerary monuments were an increasingly important element.

Principles of social reproduction may have been affected by this progressive ordering of the landscape. It is likely that residential dynamics in the Early and Middle Bronze Age were governed not only by subsistence considerations but also by the collective memory embedded in the landscape.[21] This means that over time, relocating a farmstead would have become less a matter of entering areas that were not yet marked by previous phases of habitation, cultivation or burial, and more a matter of returning to named places with historical and ancestral meanings. Dwelling, having rights in land and cultivating the land, increasingly involved interacting with the historical and mythical dimensions of the landscape. The greater frequency with which older barrows were reused in the later part of the Middle Bronze Age and the Urnfield period lends some support to this hypothesis. Barrows were perhaps the most permanent markers of older phases of occupation. But to a knowledgeable inhabitant, remains of field clearings and partially regenerated forest vegetation would equally have represented the history of habitation in an area. The gradual opening up of the landscape, moreover, would have made barrows more prominent elements of the landscape.

Over time, increasing confrontation and interaction with the historical dimensions of the landscape would have led to a closer association of social groups with particular parts of the landscape and the ancestral monuments in it. In combination with growing population levels in the later part of the Middle Bronze Age and a gradual filling-in of the landscape, this may have resulted in spatially more restricted patterns of residential mobility. Consequently, social groups would have come back to the same places at shorter intervals. Social relationships among the families that resided in a particular area would have solidified, leading to the creation of local communities as a social form that was fixed in space and perpetuated in time. The establishment of fixed burial places and stable local communities at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age can thus be understood as the effect of the progressive mythical ordering of the

[21] Cf. Kolen in prep.

landscape and the decreasing residential mobility that accompanied this. More so than in the case of the flexible social groups of the Middle Bronze Age, these communities were based on a set of communal ancestors and a shared residential territory.

This reading of the evidence regarding changing social structures differs from that presented recently by Fokkens.[22] According to him, the Middle to Late Bronze Age transition represents a phase of social fragmentation, in which extended family groups dissolved into nuclear families. In addition, Fokkens argues that new notions developed regarding a person's constitution. The individual became a more prominent element of the social order. Kin group elders – previously the selected figures that were entitled to a burial under a barrow – lost their central position in authority structures and as a result the barrow burial ritual was opened up to a much larger percentage of the population. It is true that in the Urnfield ritual the individual appears more prominently than in the Middle Bronze Age mortuary practices. However, the individualising trend of urnfields should not be exaggerated; it is still only a small minority of the graves that stand out through shape or size of the mound or through the inclusion of grave goods. On the whole, the dense layout of an urnfield cemetery suggests that the buried formed a fairly uniform category. The fact that the urnfield represented the communal burial location of multiple families is more significant to my mind than the fact that an individual mound was erected over most graves. In that sense, I would describe the Middle to Late Bronze Age transition not as a period of social fragmentation but of social integration, albeit on a modest, local scale.

Fokkens is quite right, however, to stress the need to try to explain not only why from the Late Bronze Age onwards burial places became fixed in place, but also why the funerary rites were opened up to a much larger proportion of the population.[23] The fact that the genesis of urnfields is mainly recognisable from the dramatic increase in the percentage of the population that is buried in an archaeologically visible manner suggests that some key notions changed. These may have included ideas about personhood, ancestorship and perhaps the transmission of 'life force' from generation to generation. The transition from cremation to inhumation, which began much earlier but which reached a definitive stage in the course of the Middle Bronze Age, is probably also connected to these changing ideas. If dissolving a person into their socio-cosmologically defined constituents is a function of mortuary rituals, then cremation perhaps takes this a step further than inhumation. By turning the corpse into bone fragments through fire, all individualising features of the dead person (the body but perhaps also clothing and personal adornments) are removed; what remains is the same for each corpse.

It is hard to evaluate, however, whether changing cosmological ideas were the main reason for opening up the barrow ritual to all members of society, and even harder to try to understand why these ideas may have changed. In chapter 4 (4.2.5) I argued that one of the differences between Middle Bronze Age and Urnfield-period burial practices was that in the earlier phase the demarcation of the social boundaries of a local group was achieved infrequently through the erection of a barrow, whereas in the Urnfield period it occurred almost every time a member of the community died. This social element must have been a factor in the transformation of the burial practices; apparently there was a perceived need to express collective identities with greater frequency. This is understandable in relation to the complex of changes that took place: increasing population densities, more fixed associations of local groups with particular segments of the landscape (mythical and actual), and more place-bound land use practices (see below). In this situation it would have been advantageous to represent the local community as a social entity fixed in space and perpetuated in time. The collective urnfield and relatively frequent burial practices would have presented the most appropriate context for relating this message.

[22] Fokkens 1997a.

[23] Fokkens 1997a, 369.

The Late Bronze Age is often also seen as the period in which new subsistence strategies appeared. Cattle herding appears to have become proportionally less significant in economic terms, as attested by the decrease in the size of in-house byres in Urnfield-period houses,[24] while crop cultivation gained in importance. The development of the celtic field system entailed not so much a fundamentally different system of crop cultivation as a decrease in the frequency and distances over which fields were periodically relocated, possibly in combination with an increasing emphasis on strategies to retain soil fertility levels. Both the greater reliance on an area of restricted size for cultivation and the decreasing importance of cattle herding can thus be understood as effects of the decrease in the movement of residential groups over the landscape.

6.3 LOCAL COMMUNITIES, LAND AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN THE URNFIELD PERIOD

The Urnfield period was a period of considerable demographic expansion. On a micro-regional scale, this took the form of a filling-in of the landscape with local communities. Although there are no indications that previously unused landscape zones were colonised, it is clear that settlement territories occurred in greatly increasing densities (see 5.3.2). The population growth becomes noticeable in the Late Bronze Age, but it was not until the Early Iron Age that the highest population peak before the Roman period or the Middle Ages was reached. The filling-in of the landscape corresponds with a decrease in the spatial range of patterns of residential and agricultural mobility. Territories, to the extent that they had been defined as such in the Middle Bronze Age, probably diminished in size in the Urnfield period. This was accompanied by the development of the celtic field system out of the more dynamic agricultural system based on long-term fallow cycles of the Early and Middle Bronze Age. Even though the agricultural system that resulted in the creation of celtic fields as we see them today is poorly understood, it is clear that it was still an extensive system (see 4.4). Small sections of a celtic field were cultivated while extensive parts lay fallow or were abandoned. Over the course of centuries of periodic shifts in the location of fields – back to regenerated plots or into previously uncultivated areas – celtic fields came to cover the tens of hectares that they sometimes still measure today. Alongside the urnfield, the celtic field complex is likely to have been a focus of identification and memory for the local community.

At the level of domestic groups a periodically shifting farmstead pattern remained the common form. At the level of the local community, however, this was a period of decreased mobility for people. The distribution of social groups over the landscape was more fixed compared to the flexible patterns of the Middle Bronze Age. In this relatively durable situation the urnfield would have played an important role in the representation of the long-standing bond between a local community and its settlement territory. Claims to a settlement territory could be represented and negotiated through an idiom of ancestral ownership. In situations where the population growth actually led to scarcity of physically and socially available arable land, urnfields thus had an inherent potential to act as territorial markers to the outside world. Monumental founder's graves, which occur in a number of urnfields, may well have served to give extra

[24] Fokkens 1997a, 364-366, fig. 4. This figure mainly includes farmhouses from the northern Netherlands. In the MDS region, where the number of excavated houses is much smaller, there are not such clear indications that Middle Bronze Age houses had dwelling segments that were as large as the byres. This could mean that the decrease in the overall lengths of houses was mainly the result of a decrease in the size of the byre.

weight to a recently founded community's claims to the surrounding land.[25] An alternative option in this respect was offered by the possibility of appropriating mythical ancestors by founding a new urnfield in the direct vicinity of a much older barrow (see 4.2.4).

The stability of Urnfield period settlement territories was considerable in comparison to the Middle Bronze Age, but it should not be seen as absolute.[26] Throughout the period, some cemeteries were given up and new ones were founded, suggesting that there continued to be a degree of flux in the actual constitution and distribution of social groups. This does not detract, however, from the notion that urnfields were places that were meant to convey an ideal of social cohesion and permanence.

As was argued in chapter 4, social identity at the local-group level in the Urnfield period was constructed primarily through the communal and fixed cemetery in which all or practically all of the forebears and ancestors of the group were buried. There was thus a strong degree of overlap between local communities and burial communities. Both a spatial and a temporal component can be identified here: social identity was based on the one hand on the relationship to a specific area of land, and on the other hand on the forebears and ancestors who had lived in the area before and who were buried in the cemetery. In comparison to the Middle Bronze Age patterns, this suggests that group identity itself was less flexible. It was firmly grounded in the historical relationship between a stable group, its territory and its ancestors. The potential differentiation that was suggested for the Middle Bronze Age between claims and rights derived from a mythical place of origin and those that were based on actual patterns of residence would have been much reduced by the Urnfield period.

The central value of collectivity as expressed by the urnfields appears to have been a key principle on which social life was based. But that is not to say that the constituent social groups, the households, were eclipsed by the collective. Dispersed, single-generation farmsteads were the common trend in the Urnfield period. The house and its inhabitants were symbolically fused in a single cycle of construction, habitation and abandonment (see chapter 3). The dissolution of the household was usually accompanied by the abandonment of the farmstead location. By then, grown-up children had established their own house and household elsewhere within the settlement territory, resulting in a pattern of dispersed and 'wandering' farmsteads. The assumption that the fields of a household were mostly located in the direct vicinity of a house, and shifted periodically in conjunction with the wandering farmsteads, appears justified (4.4.2). This means that the use of the land in an economic sense (the celtic field system) was embedded in the social 'use' of the land (the distribution of households over the land and their meaningful relationship with particular places in a settlement territory). In other words, the 'house-*mentalité*' of transience was inextricably connected to the social and economic dimensions of dwelling in the Urnfield period.

The house would have been an important aspect of one's social identity, but in contrast to the urnfield it was one that contained limited historical depth. In some cases there is evidence for the ritual demarcation of the abandonment of a house, but as was argued in section 3.5 the post-abandonment phase in which a house remained a symbolically meaningful place was probably of a relatively short duration, measured in seasons or years rather than generations. The contrast between the transience of habitation and land use on the one hand and the durability and collectivity expressed by the urnfield on the other suggest that rights to arable land were invested in individuals and household on a temporary basis. Presumably, the period in which a household could claim the rights of use over parts of the celtic field corresponded to the duration of occupation of a farmstead. By the time a farmstead was abandoned at the end of a domestic cycle, the rights to the land around the farmstead reverted back to the local community as a whole.

[25] Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 42-53.

[26] Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 40, note 16.

The notion of communality that was expressed through the communal, fixed and inclusive cemeteries may also have played a role in overcoming inherent tensions between the cohesion of a local community and the interests of the constituent families.[27] Especially at the time of the death of a family head issues of inheritance of rights, goods and titles became paramount. One can imagine that the need to restore the local community as a social whole conflicted with a desire to ensure the continuation of the kin group or family. The lack of clear differentiation within the urnfields suggests that after death one became part of a communal and relatively undifferentiated, possibly even anonymous, group of ancestors.[28] The urnfield was thus truly communal in this respect; it did not offer families the opportunity to construct permanent tenurial claims by emphasising links with specific ancestors or named places in the landscape. Perhaps the 'poor' nature of the urnfield burial ritual can also be understood in this light: since important functions of the burial practices were to represent the local community as a single, permanent social body and to underplay the specific interests of family groups, there would have been little place for conspicuous consumption. A more appropriate context for socially differentiating practices and strategies, at least during the Late Bronze Age, was the arena of depositions in rivers, in particular of swords.[29]

6.4 CHANGING HABITATION PATTERNS AND SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION AT THE END OF THE URNFIELD PERIOD

During the course of the Urnfield period, and especially during the Early Iron Age, two slow processes were at work that were ultimately caused by humans, but remained largely outside their control. These were strong demographic expansion, and the progressing degradation of the sandy soils (chapter 5). The first process contributed to increasingly dense settlement patterns, whereby all inhabitable parts of the landscape were settled and claimed. This means that settlement territories became more and more circumscribed. They bordered directly on other settlement territories. Expansion and relocation to less densely inhabited areas, which had been a common aspect of Middle Bronze Age habitation patterns, became more difficult. One effect of the second process was a decrease in the availability of suitable arable land within settlement territories, especially in those areas with a predominance of light sandy soils.

In section 5.3.3 it was argued that by the Middle Iron Age the combination of the two processes resulted in a fundamental change in habitation patterns and the distribution of social groups over the landscape. While many of the loamier areas remained inhabited, large parts of the sandy zones of the landscape had become unattractive as a result of secondary podzolisation and were given up for habitation. At least in the central part of the MDS region, the shift in habitation patterns was accompanied by a demographic decline. The concentration of social groups in the more loamy zones of the landscape brought with it changes in the agricultural system. The system is not very well understood, but it is clear that in comparison to the celtic field system of the Urnfield period it was based on more permanently used fields, shorter fallow cycles and presumably an increased dependence on manuring (see section

[27] See also Fontijn 1996 on the inherent duality in urnfield burial rituals: an emphasis on the community as well as the representation of the individual under a separate moundlet.

[28] Exceptions to this may have been the burial of people in long barrows. According to the interpretation by Roymans and Kortlang of the symbolism associated with long barrows, these would have been reserved for persons that were identified as founders, either at the foundation of a community and cemetery, or later on during a later phase of redefinition (Roymans/Kortlang 1999).

[29] Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 53-57, esp. 56.

5.4.2). Clearly, this system would not have been in place in a fully-fledged fashion by the beginning of the Middle Iron Age. It is more likely that the transition from the celtic field system to a more permanent and intensive system took place over the course of several centuries, beginning in the Middle Iron Age. Some of the celtic field complexes remained in use in the later stages of the Iron Age, although under a different agricultural regime, which utilised relatively favourable conditions on the banks between the original fields.

As far as can be determined, the period in which the changes in the micro-regional habitation patterns occurred – roughly the fifth century BC – coincided with a fundamental transformation in burial practices. There was a clear break in the urnfield burial ritual, especially with regard to the practice of burying most individuals under an individual mound within a communal cemetery. In section 4.2.5 this transformation was related to a shift in the ways local communities defined themselves.

The question that I would like to address here is whether there is a relationship between the changes in the habitation patterns and burial practices. Several hypotheses have been voiced regarding this question. Roymans argued in 1991 and 1995 articles that the end of the use of urnfields was part of a complex of processes which were triggered by a stagnating agrarian economy and a demographic decline. They also included growing isolation from the late Hallstatt interregional exchange networks and the collapse of systems of social ranking.[30] According to Roymans' hypothesis, the end of the use of urnfields in areas that were abandoned was the result of the dissolution of local communities, whereas the urnfields may have been used longer in the loamier regions.[31] The large-scale excavations carried out in recent years in the loamy zones of the MDS landscape have yielded good evidence for Middle Iron Age habitation remains (especially Someren and Oss). But they have not resulted in finds of urnfields or other collective cemeteries of the period between the Middle Iron Age and the beginning of the Roman era (4.2.2, 4.2.3). We can now conclude with some confidence that in the earliest phase of the Middle Iron Age the Urnfield-period burial ritual was abandoned throughout all parts and landscape zones of the MDS region. This makes Roymans' hypothesis of a direct link between a demographic decline and a break in the use of urnfields unlikely on empirical grounds.

As a variant to this model, one could suppose that the urnfields were given up because they lost their function as a territorial marker when the supposed demographic decline in the Middle Iron Age eased the pressure on land. This is not very likely either, since the remaining habitation and cultivation areas represented population concentrations rather than sparse population remnants, and one would expect, if anything, territorial competition and the need for symbolic expression of legitimate control over land to have become more intense.

The fact that urnfields were abandoned in areas given up for habitation as well as in areas with no decline in habitation intensity was also observed by David Fontijn. He argued that the end of the urnfield ritual should be understood primarily as an ideological and social transformation.[32] In his view, the end of the use of urnfields evolved out the paradoxical nature of the societal meanings attached to the cemeteries themselves. On the one hand, a value of collectivity was represented in the compact layout of the cemeteries, while on the other hand the individuality of the buried person was stressed by his or her interment under an individual mound. In the Hallstatt C period graves appeared for the first time which clearly distinguished themselves and which broke the 'code' of equality. The burial ritual became an arena for social competition. Fontijn sees this as the beginning of a process of individualisation that ultimately led to the abandonment of the collective urnfield as a burial location.[33]

[30] Roymans 1991, 63-72; idem 1995a, 7-9, note 3; see, however, also Roymans/Gerritsen 2002.

[31] Roymans 1995b, 35.

[32] Fontijn 1996.

[33] Fontijn 1996, 84.

Leaving aside the problem of explaining the period between the individualising trend of the Hallstatt C period and the end of the use of urnfields after the Hallstatt D period, I do not find the idea of an increasingly represented individuality in the burial rituals as early as the Early Iron Age entirely convincing. The graves that distinguish themselves by the size of the mound or the richness of the grave goods are too few in number to herald a structural change in the values that were represented in the burial rituals. I agree with Fontijn, however, that the break in the use of urnfields for burial should be understood primarily in terms of the social and ideological meanings of the cemeteries. But that does not rule out the possibility that there was a relationship with the wider social and economic developments suggested by the large-scale reordering of the inhabited landscape. In fact, it seems difficult to imagine that there would not have been any such relationship.

The following hypothesis can be suggested. The abandonment of settlement territories and the concentration of the population in the loamy zones of the landscape appear to have taken place over a time period of about a century, or four to five generations. In contrast to underlying processes of soil degradation and population dynamics, these changes occurred at a rate that was noticeable to the communities involved. The remains of recently abandoned arable complexes, farmsteads and cemeteries became a common element of particular zones of the landscape, demonstrating clearly the halted habitation there. While there are no indications in the archaeological record for periods of acute social unrest, intra-regional migration would have occurred, possibly accompanied by breaks in social networks, fission and social stress. With this, the rules and principles underlying the construction and reproduction of local communities lost their significance, leading to a more unstable social structure. This would have been the case just as much in areas that became increasingly unattractive for habitation as in those where habitation patterns intensified as a result of the incursion of groups from the more sandy plateaus.

Theoretically, a host of possible solutions could have been found to deal with the social and economic changes, ranging from an even greater emphasis on the local community as a bounded social body to a complete transformation of the social foundations. Judging from the archaeological evidence, the response appears to have been a certain degree of social fragmentation. The kin group became more dominant in the social order at the expense of local communities. The basis for social identity and the appropriate context for the creation and reproduction of social relationships shifted from the local community to its constituent families. The clearest indications of social fragmentation come from the burial evidence itself. The communal urnfields were replaced by much smaller clusters of graves, which were used for short periods of time and may represent the members of a single domestic group or perhaps several generations of a single family. If, as was argued above, the urnfield was the focal point for a local group and represented its history as a community belonging to a specific place, then clearly in this respect a fundamental change took place. The ideology behind the urnfield lost its significance. The emphasis on communality that was so strongly represented by the urnfields was completely absent in the following phase, not only in burial practices but also in other elements of the cultural landscape.

6.5 NEW FORMS OF SOCIAL IDENTITY AND LAND TENURE IN THE MIDDLE AND EARLY LATE IRON AGE

Several changes in material culture and habitation patterns occur in the course of the Middle Iron Age and the earlier part of the Late Iron Age. The break in the use of urnfields, the contraction of the population on the loamier soils and the gradual introduction of more intensive agricultural strategies have already been mentioned. Some other changes are the occasional occurrence of pottery inspired by forms from the Aisne-Marne region in the fifth century BC (sometimes associated with inhumation graves, 4.2.3), the development of new house types, including a shift from three-aisled to two-aisled building traditions (3.2.1), and the increasing appearance of enclosed cult places (4.3).

Most importantly, though, were a decreasing mobility of individual farmsteads and an associated increase in the duration in the use of arable complexes. As was described in section 3.2, from the Middle Iron Age onwards it became more common for farmhouses to be rebuilt at the same location or in the same farmyard. Because there are no indications that farmhouses of the Middle and Late Iron Age were replaced with greater frequency than those of the Urnfield period, this means that the duration in which families dwelt in the same place (which does not necessarily mean the same house) could be extended across generations. The transformation of the habitation patterns from 'wandering' farmsteads to stable farmsteads did not come about in a short time period. As far as is possible to draw conclusions from poorly dated plans of houses, it appears that the first regular instances of houses that were rebuilt one or more times in the same farmyard date to the Middle Iron Age (see 3.2.3). The practice became more frequent during the Late Iron Age and became dominant during the early Roman period.

Looked at from a close temporal range, the correspondence between changing habitation patterns at the level of individual farmsteads and changing agricultural practices (which, admittedly, for the Middle and Late Iron Age are largely inferred from the habitation patterns) suggests that the first should be understood primarily in terms of a changing subsistence economy. But it is also instructive to 'zoom out', to shift the perspective towards a longer term and to compare and contrast the symbolic roles of houses and farmsteads in the Urnfield period and the later phase of the Iron Age. As was described in section 6.4, the Urnfield-period contrast between communal, fixed and durable cemeteries and dispersed, single-household and transient houses suggests that in terms of social group identity the emphasis lay on the cemetery. A house probably gave rights and identity to the head and members of the household, but it lacked the extended temporal dimension that could have made it an ancestral house, one that accorded rights and identity on the basis of its historically acquired symbolic meanings.

In the later parts of the Iron Age, a very different contrast developed: unstable, inconspicuous, family-oriented burial places in combination with stable, nuclear-family farmsteads. The 'house-*mentalité*' in which transience was a key value (3.4.3), that had predominated from at least the Middle Bronze Age onwards, was gradually replaced by one in which the notion of farmstead durability took central place. A farmstead fixed in place, passing from generation to generation within a kin group, became a meaningful place in the landscape. It may have represented the enduring success of the group in sustaining a relationship with the surrounding land. The way in which such a farmstead could have been a source of social identity was potentially very different than for a house in a situation of single-generation farmsteads. Especially since the increasing durability of farmsteads was not matched by contemporaneous communal cemeteries or other enduring monuments, it can be suspected that the family group may have become a more significant social entity than in the Urnfield period. Individuals perhaps now defined themselves first and foremost as members of a particular kin group. Kin or family groups were defined by their own permanent dwelling place in the landscape, and their own group of ancestors, who were represented primarily by the ancestral farmstead itself. It has to be stressed, however, that in the Middle Iron Age the option of inhabiting a farmstead for multiple generations was still chosen less often than in

later periods (see 3.2.3). Only in the Late Iron Age did this option become increasingly popular. Burial places in this period do not appear to have had an enduring status as a *lieu de mémoire*, with the exception perhaps of graves that were located in farmyards and that may have contributed to the ancestral values represented by farmsteads.

This major reordering of the symbolic and social landscape during the mid-first millennium BC raises the question as to whether local communities held the same role in the social structure as they had done earlier. Particularly, how were rights to land distributed over the members of communities during the Middle and early Late Iron Age? The combination of the development of more intensive agricultural practices that focused on more permanently cultivated land on the one hand and the greater symbolic and social emphasis on farmsteads and family groups on the other suggests that there was also an increasing concern with passing on rights to land within family groups from one generation to the next. This will be further explored in the following section.

Finally, a note of caution is necessary. It is tempting to perceive the period between ca. 400 BC and ca. 100 BC as merely an intermediate phase, a period in which social groups were in the process of transforming themselves from one clearly ordered structure (Urnfield-period society) to another (Late La Tène period society). This is exacerbated by the choice of a long-term perspective, the relatively short duration of the period and the lack of extensive evidence in this phase regarding micro-regional settlement patterns and burial practices. These are problems of definition and methodology, however, and most probably do not reflect the historical situation.

6.6 DIVERSIFIED SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS IN THE LATE IRON AGE AND THE BEGINNING OF THE ROMAN ERA

6.6.1 THE 'LONGUE DURÉE' AND CONJECTURAL HISTORY

The Late La Tène period, especially from the middle of the 1st century BC onwards, is the first period in which written documents shed some light on the societies of the MDS region. Rather suddenly we are confronted with a world of named ethnic groups, some of which have aristocratic lineages and kingship. It is a world that knows client networks and tribute payments. Descriptions of Celto-Germanic groups by classical authors frequently refer to martial values, endemic raiding and warfare.[34] Ethnic identities appear to have been highly unstable in this period and region, as groups split up, dissolved and with equal velocity reassembled to form new entities.[35] We hear from Caesar about the decimation of the Eburones during the Gallic Wars, and from Tacitus about the incursion of new groups from the right bank of the Rhine.[36] The year 12 BC, when Drusus used the Batavian heartland directly north of the MDS region as the base for his campaigns in Germania, is commonly taken as the beginning of the Roman era. It is very likely, however, that a treaty between the Romans and the Batavi predated that year.[37] From the Augustan period onwards, Roman policy regarding the frontier zone directly south of the Lower Rhine increasingly affected indigenous social and political institutions.[38] The societies of the MDS region had been part of and were affected by supra-regional socio-political developments already in the final pre-Roman period, however.

[34] Roymans 1996b, 13-20.

[35] Slofstra 1991b, 171; Roymans 1998a; idem 2001.

[36] Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* 6, 31-35; Tacitus *Germania* 29; idem *Historiae* 4, 12.

[37] Roymans 1998a, 6-7; idem 2001, 96-99.

[38] Slofstra 1991b; Roymans 1998a. A study on the politico-geographical context of the ethnogenesis of the Batavi is in preparation by Slofstra.

Archaeologically, changes in material culture can sometimes be related to the socio-political developments that we can glean from written sources. Celtic gold coins appear in small numbers in the MDS region during the first half of the 1st century BC.[39] A group of 25 gold staters was found recently in a hoard in Beringen together with one and a half gold torques and half a gold bracelet.[40] In two recent excavations gold staters were found in Late Iron Age settlement contexts.[41] During Caesar's Gallic Wars, local coin emissions contained increasingly smaller amounts of gold and greater amounts of silver and copper. The silver and bronze *triquetrum* coins of the second half of the 1st century BC have been interpreted as belonging to Batavian emissions because the core area of their circulation is precisely the region where the Batavi were situated.[42] Many coins have been found in the Meuse at Kessel/Lith and at the cult place of Empel, but they also occur in numerous rural settlements.[43] Interestingly, these coin emissions are derived directly from almost identical gold coins minted in the German Central Rhine region in the earlier part of the 1st century BC, providing an archaeological link between the Batavian heartland and the Hessian region from which the elite groups that were instrumental in the ethnogenesis of the Batavi originated.[44]

The Late La Tène period also shows a marked increase in the depositions of metal artefacts in rivers.[45] Important categories are coins, brooches, bracelets and belt hooks, but especially weaponry: iron swords and sheaths, spear heads, and a helmet.[46] The significance of violence and warfare in Late La Tène society is attested, moreover, by the human skeletal parts that were dredged up from the Meuse at Kessel. A significant proportion of the individuals represented by their skulls appear to have been the victim of lethal injuries inflicted by sharp objects.[47] Martiality and violence would have been partly ritualised, embedded in tribal social practice and related to a certain stage in young men's lives. The deposition of weapons in rivers and at cult places may be related to a rite of passage marking the end of a man's warrior status or, during the Roman period, the end of his life as a soldier in the Roman army.[48]

As this brief overview shows, the combination of archaeological and historical sources makes it possible to build an understanding of the societies and their socio-political institutions at the beginning of the Christian era that is fundamentally different from the one gained for earlier periods. In Braudel's famous temporal terminology,[49] *conjonctures* of the medium term can be studied in combination with *longue durée* structures; in some instances a level of *histoire événementielle* appears to be only just beyond the archaeological horizon. This situation raises the question as to whether we are looking at a period that was more dynamic and that witnessed greater and more rapid changes than earlier phases of the Iron Age, or whether it is only the availability of written sources that makes it appear that way. Clearly, without the written sources we would be poorly informed about many of the political developments at the end of the Late Iron Age. But even in the absence of written sources, the sudden appearance of coins and

39 Roymans 1990, 123-127; idem 1994, and 2002, figs. 1 and 3.

40 Van Impe/Creemers/Scheers/Van Laere 1997. The authors suggest a late 2nd/early 1st century BC date for the hoard, while Haselgrove has proposed a date as early as the mid-2nd century BC (1999, 128). Little is known of the context of the hoard, apart from the fact that it was found in a small pit or posthole within a settlement. The Beringen hoard is comparable to the gold hoard found in Niederzier, west of Cologne, which appeared in a small pit next to a large isolated posthole (a cult post?) just inside the enclosing bank and ditch system of a settlement (Göbel/Hartmann/Joachim/Zedelius 1991).

41 Weert: Roymans 1998b; Lieshout: Hiddink 2000b.

42 Roymans 2001.

43 Roymans 1994; Roymans 2001, fig, 3, appendix.

44 Roymans 2001, 118-134.

45 Roymans 1990, 84-85; idem 1996b, fig. 1.

46 Roymans/Van der Sanden 1980; Roymans 1990, 84-90; idem 2002.

47 Ter Schegget 1999, 215.

48 Roymans 1996b, 18-20, fig. 1.

49 Braudel 1972; cf. Bintliff 1991; Knapp 1992.

several other types of metalwork would suggest that society went through rather rapid social transformations, which indicates that the Late Iron Age was indeed a period of significant social change.

This being so, it is necessary to ask how relevant the long-term perspective chosen in this study is for understanding local and micro-regional developments in this phase. Few would contend that the beginning of the Roman period represents a complete cultural break and that an understanding of indigenous Late Iron Age social structures is unnecessary for understanding the MDS region in the Roman era. With somewhat more success one could argue the opposite, that political events and developments occurred largely at the level of elite groups, and did not affect the long-term local structures of land use and habitation with which this study is concerned. This is not a wholly convincing argument either. The upper levels of the Eburonean and later the Batavian aristocracy were directly involved in dealings with the elites of other ethnic groups and the Romans. This aristocracy is largely absent in the settlement and burial record of the MDS region. But as suggested by the presence of gold coins in rural settlements, the rural population itself was involved – directly or indirectly - in gift-exchange networks and patron-client relationships. We must therefore take into account the possibility that events and developments during the Late La Tène period had an impact on principles of land tenure and the construction of social identity among the local communities of the MDS region. From the 1st century AD onwards, Roman frontier policy, tax demands and obligations for auxiliary troops affected the social order as well as settlement and land use patterns.[50]

It is therefore important to be aware of the fact that social and ideological transformations at the end of the Late Iron Age and the earliest Roman period may have been influenced to a far greater degree than previously by changes that were going on outside the sphere of local communities. However, we cannot dismiss the long-term perspective focusing on indigenous values and practices just yet. In order to understand the specific ways in which local communities transformed themselves under the influence of outside developments it is essential to understand the social and cultural foundations in the pre-Roman Iron Age. Moreover, the processes of change that were already taking place in indigenous society during the Late Iron Age and earlier need to be taken into account.[51]

6.6.2 SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND LAND TENURE IN A CHANGING WORLD

In many ways, the developments discernible in the organisation of space and place during the later stages of the Late Iron Age (from La Tène D1 onwards) and the earliest part of the Roman period were a continuation of processes that began in the previous period. At the level of farmsteads, the trend towards increasing durability became stronger. A larger percentage of farmhouses were rebuilt many times at the same location, and the houses themselves also underwent changes that can be interpreted as an increasing emphasis on durability The transition to the Roman era was a period in which the traditional two-aisled byre-house types (the Haps and Oss-Ussen types) were transformed into a much more sturdy two-aisled construction with deeply founded central posts and in some variants with walls founded in ditches (see 3.2). This suggests that there was a desire to build houses that lasted longer; houses were probably inhabited by two or more generations consecutively. Given the longer period during which farmsteads were inhabited – and the break in the connection between household cycle and dwelling location – it appears logical that houses were built to last longer. In the light of this interpretation, and looking back at house-building practices of the earlier parts of the Iron Age, the fairly light constructions that were common at that time should probably not be seen as the result of limitations in the technical capabilities of Iron Age house builders, but rather as an aspect of a transient 'house-*mentalité*'.

[50] Slofstra 1991b, 169-177.

[51] Cf. Haselgrove 1990; idem 1996.

At a micro-regional and regional level, the last phase of the Late Iron Age represented the beginning of a new period of demographic expansion, albeit restricted to the loamy plateaus. Given the dense clusters of settlements that are known from the Early Roman period in Oss, Weert, Someren and other areas, many of the loamy areas may have been densely populated 'islands' surrounded by much more sparsely inhabited zones where degraded soils dominated. The latter were important as grazing lands and as sources for animal fodder, but could not sustain cultivation at productive levels. This means that, even more so than in the Middle and early Late Iron Age, cultivation around the settlements had to be intensified. Fallow cycles may have been shortened and intensive manuring became an integral part of the strategies to maintain soil fertility.

In section 6.5, changing habitation and burial practices were interpreted in terms of a more permanent investment of land rights in family groups during the Middle and early Late Iron Age. It is likely that this process continued with the trend towards farmstead durability at the end of the Iron Age. Agricultural intensification and greater permanence in the cultivation of arable lands are sometimes associated with the development of a notion of land as property in the anthropological literature.[52] A stricter definition of kinship and marriage rules can help to keep land within the social group and prevent outsiders from gaining access to use rights.[53] In the Urnfield period, the collective of the local community was the main land-holding unit. In the Late Iron Age MDS region, on the other hand, where arable land was not in ample supply and required an intensive system of manuring, it is likely that passing on land within the family group was a significant concern. A symbolic emphasis on the history and permanence of the farmstead may have played a role in the representation of claims by kin groups to the arable lands around the farmstead.

If it can be suggested that kin or family groups became a land holding unit, this interpretation should be distinguished clearly from the development of private property. Land as private property in the sense of a commodity that can be alienated is a rather recent phenomenon.[54] Claims to land in prehistoric and Roman times were certainly less absolute and exclusive.[55] The notion of land tenure is therefore more appropriate than property, as it entails rights to land that may be exclusive with respect to usage and transmission, but do not necessarily entitle one to alienate that land. Within a series of overlapping claims to land, the ones expressed by family groups became more prominent, although not exclusive. Notions of land as something that was corporately held and ultimately owned by ancestors undoubtedly continued to be important values.

There is also other empirical evidence that suggests that local social foundations were not reduced to kin groups defined by their control over a certain tract of land. As discussed in chapter 4, the different elements that constituted the Late Iron Age and early Roman period landscape indicate that several kinds of communities were being defined simultaneously. In contrast to the Urnfield period when local community and burial community largely overlapped, individual and group identities appear to have been much more diverse. Several elements can be distinguished.

Throughout the Bronze Age and Iron Age, farmsteads had been distributed in a more or less dispersed pattern over a settlement territory. Then, in the last part of the Late Iron Age the first nucleated settlements were formed. In section 4.5 it was suggested that these settlements – some of the most substantial

52 Goody 1962.

53 Bloch (1975), for example, describes an ethnographic case in which, when a community switched from swidden cultivation to labour-intensive rice cultivation, the absence of a notion of landed property and an open kinship structure were replaced by a growing concern with land as property and with strategies to keep land within the social group.

54 Hann 1998.

55 Roymans/Theuws 1999, 12-18.

and durable elements in the contemporary landscape – were a potential focus for the collective identity and memory of the group of inhabitants. This was a role that had been awarded to the urnfields in an earlier period. The cohesion of the 'settlement community' was sometimes further emphasised by the construction of an enclosing ditch or ditch and bank system.[56] Furthermore, enclosed cult places became an element in the landscape, albeit not everywhere (4.3). Most functioned at a local level, and members of the corresponding cult communities would have come from the group of inhabitants of a single settlement or a small cluster of settlements. The appearance of supra-local cult places, particularly the Late Iron Age precursor of the native-Roman temple at Empel, indicates that cult communities also existed at a more encompassing social level. Finally, burial communities also reappeared with the formation of collective burial places. In several cases the foundation of these cemeteries predated the Roman period, but it was not until the 1st century AD that tumuli gave these burial places the monumental character that would have made them appropriate symbols of the collectives that buried their dead there.

From a long-term perspective, these social and cultural transformations at the end of the Late Iron Age can perhaps be interpreted as a diversification of social identities. In addition to a kin-based identity, with the durable farmstead and the family ancestors as the main foci, the dimensions of a person's social identity were also constructed by his or her membership of a local community, represented symbolically by cult place, cemetery and nucleated settlement. Most importantly, however, other identity-creating practices such as those associated with age groups, clientship, gift-exchange networks, titles and the like also acquired greater prominence than in previous periods. This is indicated archaeologically by categories of material culture such as coins and weaponry. These aspects of social identity have not been considered in this study as they did not have as clear an effect on the ordering of the landscape as the construction and use of settlements, cemeteries and cult places.

Even though the exact processes are difficult to understand, it seems likely that this trend towards a diversification of social identities came about in relation to larger socio-political developments during the last century BC and the beginning of the 1st century AD. It is noteworthy, however, that the transformations in the social order did not find their expression in the incorporation of 'foreign' cultural and social elements (with the exception of the introduction of coinage) but in the transformation of pre-existing social and cultural practices. Enclosed cult places of the Late Iron Age and Early Roman period evolved out of examples that date back to at least the Middle Iron Age. The farmstead as a durable representation of a family group had its roots in the Middle Iron Age, but was also founded on much older notions regarding the symbolic identification of house and inhabitants. The foundation of communal cemeteries in the last centuries BC represented a break from the practice over several centuries of creating small, ephemeral burial places, but in most other respects – cremation, low mounds with peripheral ditches, the relative scarcity of grave goods – the burial rituals continued practices that originated in the Bronze Age.

The fact that the local community was so prominently represented as a coherent social entity through its stable and nucleated settlement indicates that it had authority invested in it regarding local and micro-regional issues of land use and habitation. In many of these matters, it probably could have acted as a relatively autonomous entity much like local communities had in earlier periods. This may seem at odds with the suggestion made above that family groups became more important, but it should not be forgotten that claims by family groups would never have been exclusive. It is likely that the settlement group retained a certain measure of control over the arable lands, irrespective of whether they were farmed individually. The exploitation of the uninhabited and uncultivated zones of the landscape may have been regulated at the level of local communities or even clusters of settlements. In many parts of the MDS region,

[56] See also Wesselingh 2000, 214-217.

these extensively exploited wastelands covered much larger areas than the arable lands and it is unlikely that use rights were arranged at the level of individual farmsteads.[57]

Having made a case for the appearance of a relative, embedded degree of control over land by family groups from the Late or even the Middle Iron Age onwards, it is interesting to place this development in the context of developments of the Late La Tène period and the earliest Roman period. In recent studies on the earliest romanisation of Northern Gaul, the Late La Tène societies in the northern zones of that region (the MDS region) are described as having been structured by martial and pastoral values.[58] It is believed that this cultural background led to romanisation processes that differed from those in regions further to the south. There, the cultural focus lay on arable farming, and martial values were less deeply established. For reasons not very well understood – possibly as a result of a combination of internal social and economic developments and early interaction with an expanding Roman empire – the 1st century BC in the MDS region was a period in which raiding and warfare increased and martial ideals became more prominent.[59] Social competition is thought to have become more intense, focusing on cattle exchange, raiding and control over regional cults. It resulted in a limited form of political hierarchisation and the expansion of clientship relations at the time of the Roman conquest.[60]

Is it possible that land tenure also became an arena for social competition in the Late La Tène period? Seen from a purely economic perspective, this is not self-evident. The sandy landscape of the MDS region was hardly suitable for surplus production, and crop cultivation appears to have been largely geared towards local consumption throughout the Roman period. It is illustrative in this respect that in contrast to the fertile loess regions further south, Roman taxation was fulfilled largely by supplying troops to the army. The very weak development of a villa landscape in the Roman period has also been connected with the low arable potential of the region.[61] However, this does not necessarily imply that control over land held no attraction for groups involved in social competition. For one thing, it is unlikely that the valuation of land was based on its economic potential alone. A degree of control over the transmission of land rights could be used to ensure other people's loyalties in matters of inheritance and marriage alliances. Some individuals and families who were in a position of authority with regard to the transmission of collectively-held land could thus gain or strengthen a power base through the strategic manipulation of land rights.[62] In another manner, a level of claims over land and in particular the produce of that land (tribute payments) may have been introduced by elite groups who had gained rights through patron-client relationships, but who themselves lived outside the settlement territory. Outright violence may have been an additional means for warrior elites to establish control over areas of land outside their own settlement territory.[63]

If this last point must remain rather hypothetical at present, it is hopefully clear that at the beginning of the Roman period the societies in the MDS region were in a highly dynamic state. There were gradual developments in the sphere of land use and habitation patterns which had begun in previous centuries. These were connected to the changing ways in which individual and group identities were constructed and inheritance practices were organised. In addition to and closely related to this transforma-

57 Perhaps the late medieval and pre-modern situation in the sandy landscapes of the Netherlands can provide an illustrative parallel. Alongside individually farmed fields, rights of use and maintenance duties of heathlands and moors were shared by larger groups. Heringa 1982; idem 1985; Van Renes 1999, 181-204.

58 Roymans 1996b; Derks 1997.

59 Roymans 1996b, 16.

60 Roymans/Theuws 1999, 16.

61 Slofstra 1991b.

62 Cf. Roymans/Theuws 1999, 16-18.

63 Perhaps the large Late Iron Age enclosure at Weert has to be understood in the light of the unstable conditions at the time.

tion were developments such as the formation of clientship networks and warrior groups. These took place largely in a socio-political context and led to more pronounced but also more unstable hierarchical formations in the 1st century BC.

6.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the introductory chapter (1.4) I posed two sets of questions that were to serve as threads running through the chapters of this book. How did households and local communities constitute and represent themselves as social groups through their interaction with the landscape and how and why did this change? And, how were these constructions of identity related to patterns of the appropriation of land, and how and why did this change? In the preceding sections of this synthesis I have addressed these questions in a chronological account spanning the period from the Middle Bronze Age to the beginning of the Roman period. Clearly, this was not intended as a definitive treatment of the archaeology of the late prehistoric MDS region. In a fair number of cases interpretations and hypotheses have been presented that have yet to be substantiated or rejected by more thorough analyses of the extant data and the careful collection of new data. But even so, I feel that I have made strides towards several goals. I hope to have demonstrated that it is possible to construct an understanding of the social and cultural foundations of prehistoric communities and in particular of the structural transformations of those foundations. The main elements of the approach that I have explored are 1) a broad and comparative framework that encompasses multiple forms of interaction with the landscape, 2) a dwelling perspective with a focus on local groups, their self-definition and their perception and ordering of the landscape, and 3) a long-term, explicitly diachronic perspective. In my opinion, this combination makes it possible to trace and understand the archaeologically subtle yet socially fundamental transformations that took place in the past. While I have taken as my case study prehistoric communities that lacked powerful, overarching social and political institutions, my approach may also be valuable for studying the rural components of historical societies.

The choice of a long-term perspective required a focus on the interaction between 'cultural' matters – the dynamic way in which people perceived and ordered the world around them – and 'external' matters – in this case mainly ecological change and demographic variability. The further development of social models that are capable of integrating cultural and ecological perspectives is an important issue for settlement and landscape archaeology in the years to come.

Finally, I hope I have shown that, in the case of the MDS region in the first millennium BC, this perspective has led to a more dynamic picture than has hitherto been presented. Even though they were all subsistence farmers in a sandy landscape, people in the Urnfield period inhabited a world that was quite different from the one their descendants knew at the end of the Middle Iron Age. In turn, people living on the eve of the Roman conquest two and a half centuries later would still have recognised many of the practices of their long-deceased forebears, even though they themselves belonged to a society that was founded on very different principles.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	Amsterdam Archaeological Studies
AB	Archaeologia Belgica
APL	Analecta Praehistoria Leidensia
ASLU	Archaeological Studies Leiden University
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BH	Brabants Heem
BROB	Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek
BSBH	Bijdragen tot de Studie van het Brabants Heem
JROB	Jaarverslag van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek
OMROL	Oudheidkundige Mededelingen van het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden
NAR	Nederlandse Archeologische Rapporten
NDV	Nieuwe Drentse Volksalmanak
NKNOB	Nieuwsbulletin van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudheidkundige Bond
PSHAL	Publications de la Société Historique et Archéologique de la Limbourg
RAM	Rapportage Archeologische Monumentenzorg
ZAR	Zuidnederlandse Archeologische Rapporten

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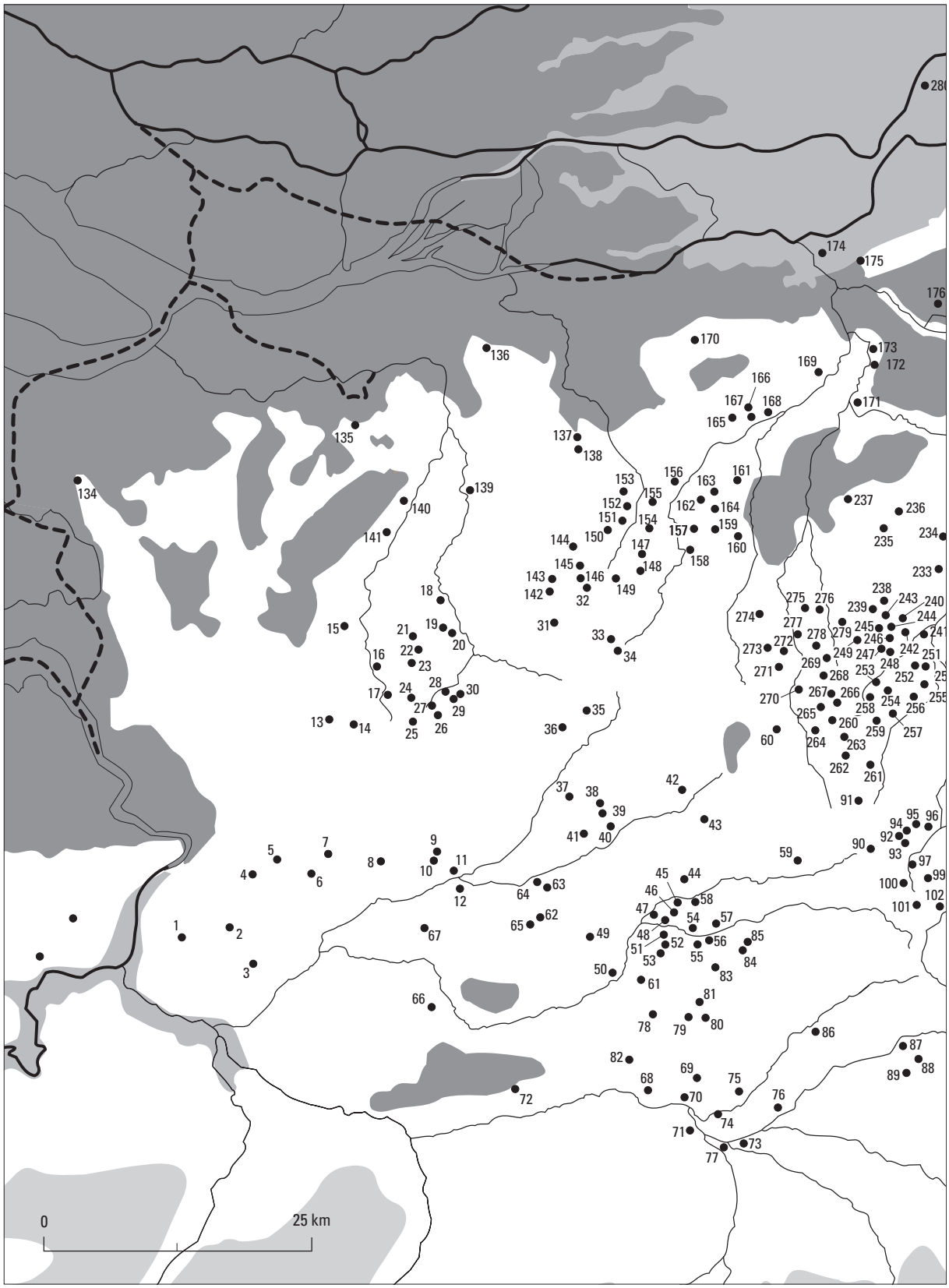
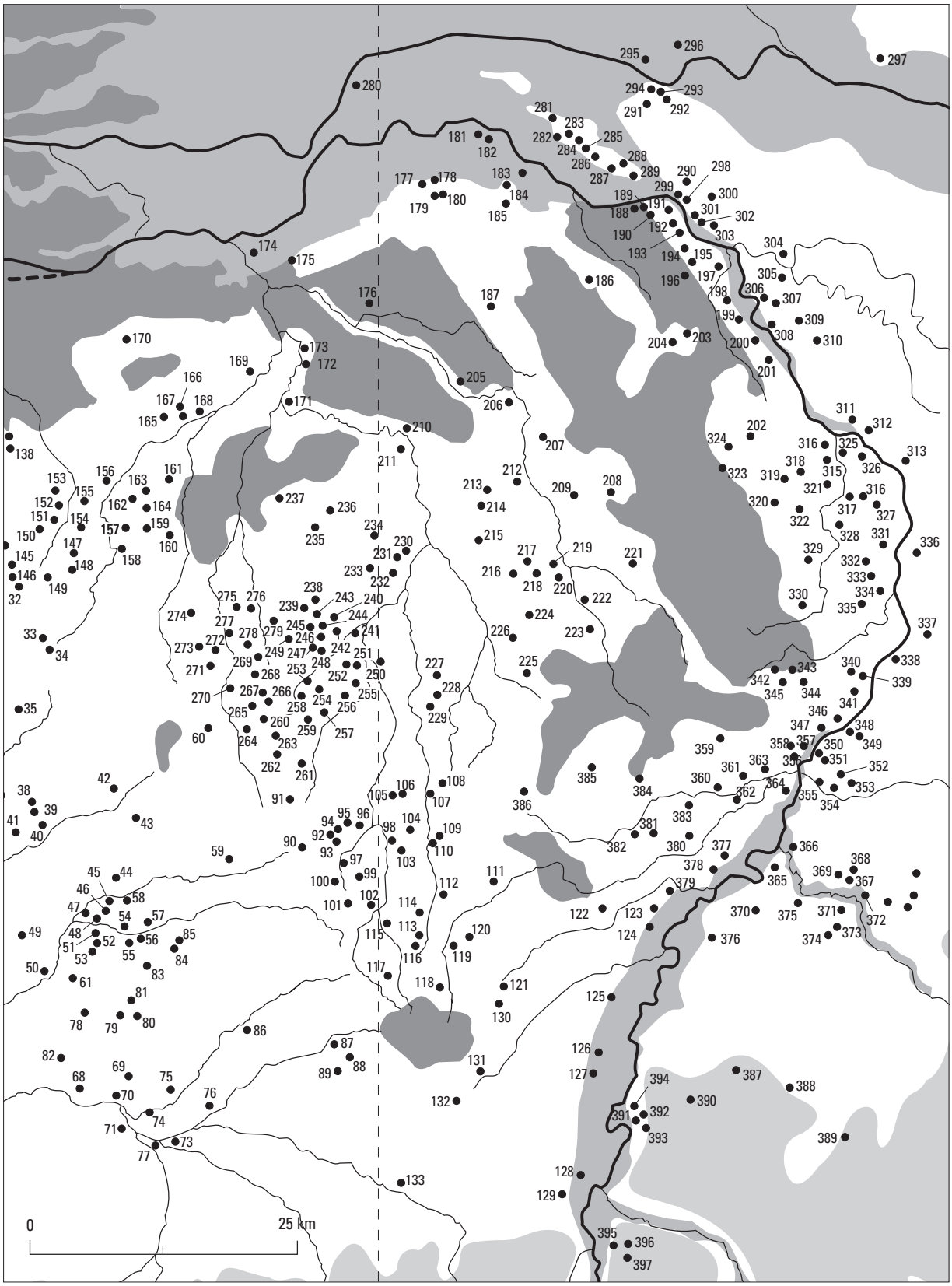
APPENDIX I

MEUSE-DEMER-SCHELDT REGION. DISTRIBUTION OF URNFIELDS



Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region. Distribution of Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and early Middle Iron Age urnfields, known from excavations, preserved urns or find reports. The numbers refer to the catalogue in appendix 2. Depicted on the map but not included in the catalogue are a small number of urnfields in East Flanders (Belgium) and Germany.



line indicates the overlap of the map from the left page

APPENDIX 2 CATALOGUE OF URNFIELDS

Catalogue of urnfields of the Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and Middle Iron Age in the MDS region. 1) number, see appendix 1; 2) name of village and location; 3) country, province (B: Belgium; N: Netherlands; An: Antwerp; Br: Brabant; Lg: Limburg; Gl: Gelderland); 4) premodern landscape (h: heathland, c: medieval arable land, o: other); 5) date of urnfield (based on recorded graves, LBA: Late Bronze Age, EIA: Early Iron Age, MIA: Middle Iron Age). If no date is given, the date of the cemetery cannot be specified further than Urnfield period (c. 1050 – c. 450 BC); 6) remarks (on location, systematic excavations, remarkable finds); 7) literature (RMO: archives Museum of Antiquities, Leiden; CAA: Central Archaeological Archive, BM: Bonefantenmuseum; see References for other abbreviations).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Wilrijk-Pater de Dekenstraat	BAn		EIA		Annaert/Goossenaerts 1988
2	Hove	BAn				Annaert/Goossenaerts 1988
3	Kontich-Duffelse Hoek	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 59
4	Borsbeek-Vogelenzang	BAn	c	LBA/EIA		Van Impe 1972
5	Wommelgem-Van Tichelenrei	BAn		LBA/(EIA)		Warmenbol 1985; Annaert/De Smet 1988
6	Ranst-Ranstveld	BAn	c	LBA/EIA	excavated	Lauwers/Van Impe 1980
7	Ranst-Hoge Aard	BAn		EIA		Annaert/Goosenaerts 1988
8	Zandhoven-Begijnenbos	BAn				Meex 1972, 41
9	Grobbendonk-Rey Wijkel	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 35
10	Grobbendonk-Scheidhaag	BAn	h	LBA/EIA		Stroobant 1905; Desittere 1968, 135; Meex 1972, 35-36
11	Grobbendonk-Kattesteert	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 34
12	Grobbendonk-Duivelsberg	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 33
13	Brecht-Merreit	BAn				Meex 1972, 34; idem 1976
14	Brecht-Eindhovenakker	BAn		LBA/EIA	excavated	Van Impe 1976, 16-21; Annaert 1999, 46
15	Wuustwezel-Wachelenbergen	BAn		LBA/EIA		Meex 1972, 41; idem 1976, nr. 168
16	Loenhout-Grote Tommelberg	BAn		LBA		Desittere 1968, 136; Van Impe 1976
17	Sint Lenaarts-De Leeuwerik	BAn				Meex 1972, 40; idem 1976, nr. 143
18	Meer-Wildert	BAn				Meex 1972, 37; idem 1976, nr. 80
19	Hoogstraten	BAn			N of village	Meex 1976, nr. 48
20	Hoogstraten-Kruisberg	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 47
21	Hoogstraten-Aard	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 45
22	Hoogstraten-Achter de Kluis	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 46
23	Rijkevorsel-Ter Hees	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 135
24	Sint Lenaarts-Dries	BAn		LBA/EIA		Van Impe 1975
25	Oostmalle-Klokkenheide	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 109
26	Rijkevorsel-Helheuvels	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 132
27	Rijkevorsel-Helhoeksheide	BAn	h	EIA/MIA		Stroobant 1921; Meex 1972, 39-40; M. Theunissen 1993
28	Rijkevorsel-Berg	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 136
29	Rijkevorsel-Ter Meerhout	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 137
30	Rijkevorsel-'s-Heeremeeren	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 134
31	Merksplas-Lipseinde	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 92
32	Baarle-Hertog-Donkerstraat	BAn		EIA		Meex 1972, 33; Verhagen 1997, 31
33	Ravels-Klein Ravels-Heike	BAn	h	EIA/MIA	excavated	Annaert/Van Impe 1985
34	Ravels-Raaftuinen	BAn	h	EIA		Van Impe 1978b
35	Turnhout-Kastelijn	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 153
36	Turnhout-Het Looi	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 154
37	Tielen	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 149
38	Kasterlee-Goor	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 53
39	Kasterlee-Partisaensberg	BAn	h	EIA	excavated	Van Impe 1978a; idem 1981
40	Kasterlee	BAn			S of village	Meex 1976, nr. 54
41	Lichtaart	BAn			E of village	Meex 1976, nr. 68
42	Retie	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 131
43	Dessel	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 13

44	Mol-het Crijdt	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 94
45	Geel-Bolderbergen	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 23
46	Geel-Asberg	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 22
47	Geel-Tombroeken	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 25
48	Geel-Steentjes	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 24
49	Geel-Wolfsbossen	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 26
50	Geel-Zammel/Oosterlo	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 27
51	Meerhout/Zittaart-Alvinnenberg	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 81
52	Meerhout/Zittaart-Het Gebergte	BAn	h	LBA	excavated	Roosens/Meex 1975; Meex 1976, nr. 81
53	Meerhout/Zittaart-Theunishei	BAn	h			Meex 1976, nr. 85
54	Meerhout-Voddenberg	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 83
55	Meerhout-Windmolenblok	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 84
56	Meerhout-Galgenheide	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 82
57	Balen-Lil-Hulsen	BAn		IA		Meex 1976, nr. 5
58	Mol-Alverenberg	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 93
59	Balen-Wezel	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 6
60	Postel-Grootbos	BAn	h			unpublished, N. Roymans pers. comm.
61	Eindhout-Tuerlinkx	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 16
62	Olen-Berg	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 105
63	Olen-Bank	BAn	h	LBA		Desittere 1968, 136
64	Olen-Vandenbecelaerheide	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 107
65	Olen-Tuinsberg	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 106
66	Heist-op-den-berg	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 42
67	Herenthout	BAn				Meex 1976, nr. 44
68	Diest-Molenstede	BBr				Meex 1976, nr. 15
69	Deurne-Hunnenberg	BBr		LBA		Desittere 1968, 135
70	Schaffen-Schoonaarde	BBr		LBA/EIA		Desittere 1968, 136-137
71	Webbekom-Parelbergstraat	BBr		EIA		Vynckier 1981
72	Aarschot-Langdorp	BBr		EIA/MIA	excavated; flat graves	Mertens 1951
73	Halen	BLg			border with Linkhout	Meex 1972, 18; idem 1976, nr. 40
74	Zelem	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 170
75	Meldert	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 90
76	Lummen-Kerkveld	BLg				Meex 1972, 23; idem 1976, nr. 77
77	Donk	BLg	c	LBA/EIA		Van Impe 1980; idem 1983a and 1983b
78	Tessenderlo-Hunnenberg	BLg	c	EIA		Meex 1972, 31
79	Tessenderlo-Varode	BLg				Meex 1972, 31; idem 1976, nr. 148
80	Tessenderlo-Schoonhees	BLg				Meex 1972, 31; idem 1976, nr. 146
81	Tessenderlo	BLg			near chemical factory	Meex 1972, 31; idem 1976, nr. 147
82	Tessenderlo-Engsbergen	BLg	c	EIA	excavated	Creemers 1994, 1997
83	Kwaadmechelen-Kepkensbergen	BLg				Meex 1972, 20; idem 1976, nr. 62
84	Kwaadmechelen	BLg			at border with Oostham	Meex 1972, 20; idem 1976, nr. 61
85	Oostham-Slagveld	BLg		EIA		Meex 1972, 27
86	Beringen-Geiteling	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 8
87	Houthalen-Lilo	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 50
88	Houthalen-Meulenberg	BLg				Meex 1972, 19; idem 1976, nr. 49
89	Houthalen-De Pompen	BLg				Meex 1972, 19; idem 1976, nr. 51
90	Lommel-Kattenbos	BLg	h	EIA/MIA	excavated; iron razor, tweezer, scraper	De Laet/Mariën 1950
91	Lommel-Blekerheide	BLg		IA		Meex 1976, nr. 72
92	Lommel-Karrestraterheide	BLg				Meex 1972, 21; idem 1976, nr. 73
93	Overpelt-Overberg	BLg				Meex 1972, 28; idem 1976, nr. 118
94	Overpelt-Kruiskiezel	BLg	h	EIA		De Laet 1961, 153-158; Meex 1972, 28; Warmenbol 1985
95	Overpelt-Dorperheide	BLg		EIA		Meex 1972, fig. 7, 94-95
96	Overpelt-Houtmolenheide	BLg				Meex 1972, 29; idem 1976, nr. 115
97	Overpelt-Lindelse Hei/Hunnenberg	BLg	h	LBA/EIA	excavated	Meex 1972, 29; Van Impe 1992, 535-537
98	Overpelt-Heesakkerheide	BLg	h			Meex 1972, 29
99	Overpelt-Hoeven	BLg				Meex 1972, 30; idem 1976, nr. 114

100	Eksel-Winner	BLg	h	EIA	excavated; also Harpstedt urn in periphery BA barrow	De Laet 1961, 158-161; Meex 1972, 16
101	Eksel-Statie	BLg		EIA		Meex 1972, fig. 1.5-6
102	Eksel-Schansheide	BLg				Meex 1972, 16; idem 1976, nr. 18
103	Neerpelt-Herent	BLg		LBA		Meex 1972, 25
104	Neerpelt-De Roosen	BLg	h	LBA/EIA	excavated	Van Impe/Beex/Roosens 1973
105	Neerpelt-Grote Hei	BLg	h	LBA/EIA	excavated	Roosens/Beex/Van Impe 1975
106	Neerpelt-Achelse Dijk	BLg	h	LBA	excavated	Roosens/Beex/Van Impe 1975
107	Achel-Pastoorsbos	BLg	h	LBA/EIA	excavated	Beex/Roosens 1967
108	Hamont-Haarterheide	BLg	h	EIA	excavated; secondary burials in EBA/MBA barrows	Roosens/Beex 1965
109	Kaulille-In de Marche	BLg				Meex 1972, 19, idem 1976, nr. 55
110	Kaulille-Dorperheide	BLg	h	EIA	excavated	Engels/Van Impe 1984; idem 1985
111	Bocholt	BLg		EIA		Meex 1972, 15
112	Grote Brogel-Kievelden	BLg	h	EIA	excavated	Roosens/Beex/Bonenfant 1963
113	Grote Brogel-Kloosterbos	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 37
114	Peer-Maarlo	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 121
115	Peer-Mollem	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 122
116	Peer-kapel van Deust	BLg				Meex 1972, 30; idem 1976, nr. 120
117	Peer-Heihuiskens	BLg				Meex 1972, 30; idem 1976, nr. 119
118	Meeuwen-Perriten	BLg		EIA		Meex 1972, 24
119	Ellikom-De Bunters	BLg				Meex 1972, 17; idem 1976, nr. 21
120	Wijshagen-Soetebeek	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 166
121	Wijshagen-De Rieten	BLg	h	MIA	excavated; 1 bronze cista, 2 bronze situlae; bronze armour, horse gear	Maes/Van Impe 1985; idem 1986; Van Impe/Creemers 1991; Van Impe 1998
122	Kinrooi	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 57
123	Kessenich	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 56
124	Ophoven/Geistingen-Molenkade	BLg				Meex 1972, 28; idem 1976, nr. 111
125	Elen-Ottenakker	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 20
126	Lanklaar-Kerk-kanaal	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 65
127	Leut-Grijze Koe	BLg				Meex 1972, 20; idem 1976, nr. 66
128	Neerharen-Rekem	BLg	c	LBA/EIA	excavated; grave with fragments of 3 swords, 2 chapes	De Boe 1983; idem 1985 and 1986; Warmenbol 1988, 248
129	Lanaken-Bessemerberg	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 64
130	Gruitrode-Donnersberg	BLg				Meex 1972, 18; idem 1976, nr. 39
131	Genk-De Kiewit	BLg				Meex 1972, 17; idem 1976, nr. 30
132	Genk-Staelen Heide	BLg	h	EIA		Meex 1972, 17
133	Diepenbeek-Lutselus	BLg				Meex 1976, nr. 14
134	Halsteren	NBr			S of Antoniusmolen	Meex 1972, 51; Beex 1966a
135	Leur-Hoogakker	NBr				Meex 1972, 56
136	Oosterhout	NBr	c	LBA/EIA	SW of Vraggelen, 200 m N of Mark canal	Verwers/Beex 1978, 9
137	Gilze en Rijen-airport	NBr	h	EIA		RMO (k 1940/10.3)
138	Gilze en Rijen-Verhoven	NBr	h	EIA		Verhagen 1984, 64-65; RMO (k 1926/12.6)
139	Strijbeek-Strijbeekse Hei	NBr	h	EIA/MIA	excavated	Bursch 1937
140	Rijsbergen-Tiggelt	NBr				Verhagen 1984, 68
141	Zundert-Kleine Beek	NBr		EIA	between Stuivezand and Klein Zundert	Beex 1969b
142	Baarle-Nassau-Witte Bergen	NBr	h			Meex 1972, 43; Verhagen 1997, 31
143	Baarle-Nassau-Wolvenven	NBr	h			Meex 1972, 43; Verhagen 1997, 30
144	Baarle-Nassau-Diericxven	NBr				Meex 1972, 43; Verhagen 1997, 30
145	Baarle-Nassau-Reuthse Bergen/Ulicootse Heide	NBr	h			Meex 1972, 43; Verhagen 1997, 14, 29-30
146	Baarle-Nassau-Molenheide	NBr	h	EIA		Beex 1984b, 111-113; Verhagen 1997, 23-28

147	Baarle-Nassau-De Dekt	NBr	h	EIA/MIA	also on Alphen territory	Verhagen 1997, 17-20, 51-54
148	Baarle-Nassau-Bedafse Heide/Veldbraak	NBr	h	EIA/MIA		Verhagen 1984; 1997, 20-23
149	Baarle-Nassau-Tommelse Heide	NBr	h	EIA		Verhagen 1997, 31; Beex 1984b
150	Alphen-Molenheide	NBr	h	MIA		Peeters 1978; Verhagen 1984; idem 1997, 37-47
151	Alphen-Keutelberg	NBr	h			Verhagen 1997, 47-50
152	Riel-Brakel/Brakelse Akkers	NBr	h	EIA		Peeters 1978; Verhagen 1997, 63-73
153	Riel-Rielsche Heide/ Alphense weg	NBr				Verhagen 1997, 73-75; Beex 1984c
154	Goirle-Papenmoerke	NBr				Meex 1972, 49
155	Goirle-Hoogeind	NBr	h	LBA/EIA	excavated; razor	Remouchamps 1926; Verwers 1966c
156	Goirle-Abcoven	NBr				Meex 1972, 48
157	Hilvarenbeek-Nonnenbossen	NBr				Beex 1970b, 24
158	Hilvarenbeek-Appelberg	NBr			near Tulder	Beex 1970b, 24
159	Hilvarenbeek-Laag Spul	NBr	c	LBA	excavated	Modderman 1957/1958; Verwers 1975
160	Diessen-Groenstraat	NBr				Beex 1970a, 25
161	Moergestel-Molenakkers	NBr	c	EIA	excavated	Verwers 1981
162	Tilburg-Molenstraat	NBr		EIA		Verwers 1994, 29
163	Tilburg	NBr		MIA?		Jan Roymans pers. comm.
164	Tilburg-Wandelbos	NBr	c	EIA		Peeters 1973
165	Berkel-Enschot-Ekelbos	NBr		EIA		Meex 1972, 48
166	Berkel-Enschot	NBr	c	LBA/EIA	between Enschot and Oisterwijk	Meex 1972, 48
167	Berkel-Enschot-Akkerweg	NBr	c	EIA/MIA	excavated	Kleij/Verwers 1994, 131-133
168	Oisterwijk-Beukendreef	NBr	h		N of Henkelomse Loop	Meex 1972, 62
169	Esch-Hoogkeiteren	NBr	c	LBA/EIA	excavated	Van den Hurk 1980
170	Loon op Zand	NBr	h	EIA	W of Waalwijk-Loon op Zand road	Verwers 1994, 29
171	Boxtel	NBr		EIA		Meex 1972, 46
172	Sint Michielsgestel-Geenenberg	NBr				Meex 1972, 58
173	Sint Michielsgestel-Heilig Weike	NBr				Meex 1972, 58
174	Empel-Armen Hoogaard	NBr		EIA		Meex 1972, 48; Beex 1970d
175	Rosmalen-Heines	NBr		EIA		Beex 1970c, 32
176	Berlicum-Middelrode	NBr		MIA?		Beex 1968a; Meex 1972, 45
177	Oss-Ussen	NBr	c	EIA/MIA	excavated; dispersed graves	Van der Sanden 1987b; idem 1998c
178	Oss-IJsselstraat	NBr	c	EIA/MIA	excavated; iron torque	Wesselingh 1993
179	Oss-Vorstengraf	NBr	h	LBA/EIA	excavated; grave with bronze situla (Ha C), iron sword, and horse gear	Holwerda 1934; Fokkens/Jansen 1998; idem in prep; Jansen/Fokkens 1999, 85-90
180	Berghem-Zevenbergen	NBr	h	EIA	excavated	Verwers 1966b
181	Deursen/Ravenstein-Dennenburg	NBr	c	EIA/MIA		RMO; coll. A. Stuart (Wijchen)
182	Ravenstein-Deursen	NBr		MIA		Verwers 1981
183	Ravenstein-Herpen/Herpsebrug	NBr				Meex 1972, 63; BH 1950, 94
184	Ravenstein-Herper Duinen	NBr	h	EIA		Beex 1968b
185	Schaijk	NBr	h	LBA/EIA	excavated	Van Giffen 1949a
186	Mill-Ten Hove	NBr				Meex 1972, 59
187	Uden-Stabroeksche Heide	NBr	h	EIA/MIA	excavated	Remouchamps 1924
188	Beers-Groot Linden/ Kraaienbergse Plas	NBr	c	LBA	excavated	Fokkens/Smits 1989
189	Beers-Kraaienberg	NBr	c	EIA		Verwers/Beex 1978, 17-18
190	Beers-Dommelsvoort	NBr	c	EIA		RMO; Meex 1972, 34
191	Cuyk-Galberg	NBr				Meex 1972, 47; Beex 1967a, 67
192	Cuyk-Heeswijkse Kampen	NBr	c	LBA/EIA	excavated	Koolen/de Wit 1981; Hessing/Verwers/ Van Kregten 1989
193	Cuyk-St.Martinuskerk/ Korte Molenstraat	NBr	c	EIA	excavated	Bogaers 1966; Verwers 1990a, 48
194	Cuyk-Haanwijk	NBr				Meex 1972, 47

195	Haps-Laarakker	NBr				Beex 1970f, 136
196	Haps-Kamps Veld	NBr	c	EIA/MIA	excavated	Verwers 1972
197	Oeffelt-Hoogland	NBr			mention of bronze situla used as urn	Hermans 1865, 61
198	Boxmeer-Hoge Dijk	NBr				Meex 1972, 46
199	Boxmeer-Maasdijk	NBr				Meex 1972, 46
200	Sambeek	NBr		EIA		pers. comm. Verscharen 1990
201	Vierlingsbeek-Vliegenberg	NBr		LBA		Desittere 1968, 130
202	Vierlingsbeek-Het Roozendaal	NBr		EIA		RMO (Vr.O.1; Vr.O.3)
203	Oploo-De Weyer	NBr			near water-mill	Meex 1972, 62
204	Oploo	NBr			W of village	Meex 1972, 62
205	Veghel-Scheifelaar	NBr	c	MIA	excavated	Kleij/Verwers 1994, 133-134
206	Erp-Vossenberg	NBr				Meex 1972, 48
207	Gemert-Kranebraken	NBr	c	EIA		CAA; NKNOB 1956, 195
208	Milheeze	NBr	h	EIA		Meex 1972, fig. 17-6; CAA; RMO
209	Milheeze	NBr				Meex 1972, 59
210	Sint Oedenrode-Haagakkers	NBr	c	LBA/EIA	excavated	Van der Sanden 1981
211	Nijnsel-Huisakker	NBr	c	MIA	excavated	Hulst 1964a
212	Beek en Donk-Hoge Berg	NBr	c	LBA/EIA		CAA; RMO; Desittere 1968, fig. 42.4
213	Lieshout	NBr			between Rulle and Achterbos	Meex 1972, 56; Beex 1971
214	Nuenen-Rulle	NBr	h			Beex 1969a
215	Nuenen-Haneven	NBr	h	LBA/EIA		Hermans 1865, 100; Beex 1969a
216	Mierlo-Galgeven	NBr				Meex 1972, 58
217	Mierlo-Molenheide	NBr	h	LBA		Beex 1966b
218	Mierlo-Het Loo	NBr	c	MIA	excavated	Kortlang pers. comm.
219	Mierlo	NBr			between Mierlo and Helmond	Meex 1972, 58
220	Mierlo-Hout-Snippenscheut	NBr	c	EIA/MIA	excavated	Tol 1999
221	Deurne-Sint Jozefsparochie	NBr	h	LBA/EIA		Beex 1984a
222	Asten	NBr			along Aa river, 600 m N of lock 11	Meex 1972, 43
223	Someren-Waterdael	NBr	c	EIA/MIA	excavated	Kortlang 1999
224	Someren-Philips Kampeerterrein	NBr	h	EIA	excavated; iron sword fragment	Modderman 1955a; idem 1962/1963
225	Someren-Kraaijenstark	NBr	h	EIA	iron sword (Ha C)	Kam 1956
226	Someren-Hoenderboom	NBr	h			Meex 1972, 64
227	Leende-Valkenhorst	NBr				Iven/Van Gerven 1974, 25
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338	Tegelen	NLg	h	EIA		Bloemers/Willems 1980/1981, 43-44
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